

Resumes/CV

Has it been awhile since you've last updated your resume/CV? If so, don't worry, you're not alone. Many executives suddenly find themselves in need of a new resume/CV, especially if they haven't been thinking about their career strategy or their next opportunity.

If this is the case for you, resist the temptation to add your most recent positions and accomplishments to the bottom of an old resume/CV. Take the time and effort to give your resume/CV the refresh it will need to support your job search and career goals. A well-written resume/CV has consistent motifs and backup details that show your qualifications for your career target, while omitting extraneous information and positions.

Writing an executive resume/CV can be difficult even for executives who have strong writing abilities. This is because writing a resume/CV is all about strategy. A resume/CV writer can look at your experience impartially, analyze any potential hurdles in your search, and create a strategy that highlights your overarching accomplishments, and doesn't dwell on your more difficult to explain roles and transitions. He or she can also help you develop your personal brand, which helps keep your resume/CV and job search focused; and brings an objective view that will help prevent your resume/CV from being filled with company-specific jargon that others won't understand.

Why Do I Need a Resume/CV?

A resume/CV is not a memorial of your work history — it's not a summary of your whole career — it's a tactical marketing document that demonstrates your value to executive recruiters and potential employers. You'll need a resume/CV when actively seeking new opportunities, but it's also extremely helpful to have an up-to-date resume/CV during other stages of your executive career. A few scenarios where you may find it useful to leverage your resume/CV include:

- Networking (especially with executive search consultants)
- Internal promotions or transfers
- Introductory information for speaking engagements
- To substantiate award recognition
- Background information for political appointments

You should update your resume/CV regularly: Anytime you change jobs, receive a promotion, or, at minimum, yearly. A beneficial time to update your resume/CV is before your annual performance review. This can allow you to “kill two birds with one stone” by documenting your recent accomplishments as you prepare for your review at the same time as you add these accomplishments to your resume/CV. As you update your resume/CV, you'll also take some time to self-assess, which can produce helpful insights to discuss with your boss during your performance review.

Another time you may begin considering a resume/CV refresh is if you don't have a good feeling about your place in your organization. Maybe there's been significant turnover or the company has not been performing as well as anticipated. Or there has been a change in CEO or the senior management team. Or there has been a change in CEO or the senior management team.

These scenarios are often signs that it's time to give your resume/CV (and your whole career strategy) an update to prepare for a potentially unexpected career transition. Conversely, your company may be performing exceedingly well – this is still an excellent time to update your resume/CV in case competitors or executive search consultants begin to reach out with new opportunities.

Not certain about what the next stage of your career should look like? Then it's time to update your resume/CV – doing so can help you answer this question by identifying accomplishments and projects you enjoyed in your previous roles. Your resume/CV shows your current skills, qualifications, and career potential. Identifying a common thread in your experience and accomplishments can help you choose the next step in your career.

If you're worried about ageism or not having up-to-date skills, working on your resume/CV can also help identify specific certifications or training that needs to be refreshed. Having certifications from over 10 years ago listed on your resume/CV provides little value as things have most likely changed since then in your industry and specialization. As you refresh your resume/CV, look out for old education and certifications and decide if you could present more value on your resume/CV by refreshing these or adding newer ones.

Elements of an Excellent Resume/CV

Candidates tend to think too much about what a resume/CV needs to include (experience, accomplishments, etc.), that they forget about its real purpose. Your resume/CV is a tool that can help you begin a different role, a different career, or even a different life. The basic elements of a successful resume/CV are important, but will not be all you need to find your next opportunity. Focus on communicating your value and your brand foremost above simply getting the resume/CV formula right.

Be Concise and Relevant

A resume/CV should be focused, which often means two pages is the ideal length. In some cases, a three-page resume/CV is appropriate for senior-level executives that have a number of patents, publications, speaking engagements, board positions, etc. Your resume/CV should focus on your top achievements, strongest selling points, and greatest strengths. Experience from over 15 years ago is often outdated, so in most cases, it is not necessary to include.

Your resume/CV is a summary; therefore it should not tell the reader everything about your career. The information that you do provide needs to support your thesis that you are the right person for the job. Your resume/CV needs to prove that this job is absolutely the right next step for your career. Question the value of every piece of information you include. Is it really necessary to include project names or the precise months and years the projects were deployed? Details like this will likely provide no value to the reader in understanding what you achieved and what you have to offer.

Optimize for the Skimmers

Resume/CV design should immediately draw the reader's eyes to the most important parts of your resume/CV. One way to do this is to use bolding strategically to draw the reader to major achievements at first glance. The first time an executive recruiter or hiring manager looks at your resume/CV will often be a quick occurrence, so you don't have much time to catch his or her attention.

Adding to this complication, many companies now require you to submit your resume/CV through an Applicant Tracking System (ATS). In some cases, this is a formality after the recruiter or hiring manager has already met with you, but in others, like if you submit your resume/CV to a company's job board, database or online job site, the ATS will consider your resume/CV before it even reaches human eyes. The solution here is to create a second version of your resume/CV that has been specifically optimized for these systems (including keywords that match the job description, no images, common fonts such as Arial or Times New Roman fonts, etc.).

Incorporate Keywords

Executive candidates are often unsure about how to use keywords in their resumes/CVs. Is the goal to get as many keywords as possible into the resume/CV (keyword stuffing)? How do I decide which keywords to include? Where do I put these keywords? The answers to these questions are actually more intuitive than you might believe.

Your resume/CV needs to include keywords that are relevant to your target roles, the skills required, and the company culture. Keywords are often nouns and can include specific skills, qualifications, industry terms, specialties, etc. To find the right keywords, review the job description, highlight all the keywords listed, and include them throughout your resume/CV in context rather than in one section. You should indicate your top specialties in a short list at the top of your resume; but be careful – too many keywords can look awkward and forced. In general, most ATS algorithms have learned to discount keyword stuffing and give more weight to keywords that are associated with verbs as part of the narrative.

Format Correctly

One of the initial decisions you'll make when writing your resume/CV is how to format the document and how to order your skills and experience on the page. The majority of executives used to find chronological resumes/CVs, which list their key achievements and experiences in order, to be the most effective. This is often not the case in today's job search market. This kind of resume/CV can make it more difficult for the reader to figure out the value you can bring to their organization.

There are three resume/CV layouts: Reverse chronological, functional, and hybrid. Most executive job seekers will realize the most success by using a hybrid layout because it incorporates the best elements of both the reverse chronological and functional layouts. Like the reverse chronological resume/CV, it demonstrates your employment background – job titles, companies, dates, key areas of duties, and achievements – things that all recruiters, hiring managers, and HR executives want to identify. And, like the functional, the hybrid begins with a solid presentation of your most notable skills, qualifications, talents, and career highlights in some form of a career summary section.

Tell Your Complete Story

Even though your executive resume/CV should not be a full detailing of your professional career since college, doesn't mean you should leave gaps. As an executive, you may incur gaps on your resume/CV from going back to school to get a master's degree; taking time out to travel or volunteer; deal with a personal or family health issue; raise your children; or numerous other reasons. That's OK, but you must be able to explain this on your resume/CV and during interviews.

Think about this from the recruiter's or hiring manager's perspective. When he or she notices gaps in your resume/CV, the recruiter will become curious about what you've been doing, which will distract from the information on your resume/CV related to why you're a great candidate.

Depending on the circumstance, explaining your situation on your resume/CV can be as simple as adding a new “Volunteer Work” section or adding a point to your “Education” section. If the reason was due to a personal-related leave, include two lines that say what you were doing (“Sabbatical,” “Family Leave,” etc.) and the dates this occurred. If you were searching for a job, make sure you have other activities that you can include to account for this time period, such as “Contract Assignment,” “Board Leadership,” “Coursework in...,” “Pro Bono Assignment,” etc. Be sure your resume/CV tells the full story, instead of making the reader assume the worst.

Internationalize

If you’re interested in finding opportunities abroad, internationalizing your resume/CV is essential. Not doing so can impact your ability to be considered by executive recruiters and hiring managers. It could also improve your domestic candidacy due to the more globalized marketplace we all live in today. If you are pursuing multinational companies or in-country companies that work broadly across borders, the US/multinational style resume/CV will be perfect for all your requirements. Only if you are targeting smaller companies in your home country will you need a CV in the style that is traditional in your country.

If you’re seeking an opportunity in a specific foreign country or region, it would benefit your search to get someone from the region, such as a resume/CV writer, to help you write your resume/CV. In many European and Asian countries, it is standard practice to include a photo along with your date of birth, marital status, number of children, and other personal information at the top of the resume/CV. the company culture.

Keywords are often nouns and can include specific skills, qualifications, industry terms, specialties, etc. To find the right keywords, review the job description, highlight all the keywords listed, and include them throughout your resume/CV in context rather than in one section. You should indicate your top specialties in a short list at the top of your resume; but be careful – too many keywords can look awkward and forced.

In general, most ATS algorithms have learned to discount keyword stuffing and give more weight to keywords that are associated with verbs as part of the narrative. In North America, this kind of information is not included because of fair-hiring laws. In the UK, it is also not included due to equal opportunity laws. So if you have a US/multinational style Resume/CV that you’re using for most positions, you can simply add a brief section of personal information at the top to feel more fitting for jobs in those specific countries.

Target Your Resume/CV for Each Role

The resume/CV tweaking doesn’t stop once you’ve created your fully-branded document. Your resume/CV should be viewed as a template that you will need to tweak for each company and role. In addition to making updates to keywords, you will also need to address any key points the company is looking for and potentially shift the order of importance in your resume/CV.

Remember, your resume/CV should present your experience in such a way as to support your current career goals. For example, if you’re a CIO in the consumer products and services industry seeking a similar CIO job, you’ll approach your resume/CV in such a way as to “paint the picture” of a well-qualified technology executive, which is exactly “who” you are.

Conversely, if your goal is to transition into a COO-type position, still in consumer products and services, your executive resume/CV will be completely different. Instead of focusing on all of your technology talents, your objective will be to demonstrate your operations-related experience. This resume/CV paints an entirely different picture of who you are.

Don't Forget to Include These Things in Your Resume/CV

- Gmail, Outlook, custom email addresses says that you are up-to-date with technology.
- Listing your LinkedIn profile link allows reader to obtain more info.
- Ensure that you have an understandable and descriptive title at the top of your resume/CV.
- The top one-fourth to one-third of your executive resume/CV should highlight major qualifiers such as relevant degrees, years of experience in the target industry, or significant achievements.
- Quantified accomplishment-based statements in the experience section show your value.
- Providing a company description can help to further define your role.
- Focus more on accomplishments than job responsibilities – these make you stand out.
- Keep bulleted lists and paragraphs short.

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