

Preparing Your CV

Your CV is one of your most important documents and is the tool which opens doors to your future. It is well worth spending the time, and if necessary, the money, to ensuring the content and layout of your CV is the best and most professional you can make it.

The trick is to keep your CV simple. There is no need for fancy graphics or long paragraphs explaining your career objective or achievements. As your recruitment consultant forwarding your CV to potential clients, we need to be able to assess your skills and experience quickly. That means you need to provide information on your CV in a logical and succinct way.

Tips for Writing a Great CV

Download our template to get you started. You can also download templates from the Internet, as well as from your Microsoft Word package.

Treat the template as a guide to what to include, and change the order of sections to suit you and your employment situation. For example, if you are currently working, detail your work history and achievements close to the top. If you are currently studying, detail your education and qualifications before your work history.

Here are some other tips to consider when writing your CV.

- Format your CV using appropriate headings, bullet points and plenty of “white space”. Use a font and font size that is clear and easy to read.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short and punchy. Overlong sentences and paragraphs can make your CV hard to read.
- Take the opportunity to sell your key skills, attributes, and experience in your CV. Keep your CV positive by focusing on what you have to offer a potential employer. However, be sure to be honest and accurate about your experience and abilities.
- Do not leave gaps in your CV. If you took time out of employment or study because of travel, health reasons or unemployment, include this information in your CV.
- Check for spelling mistakes and poor grammar. Errors in your CV can detract from an otherwise good CV and make you look lazy or careless. Get other people to check your CV to ensure all errors are picked up.
- Keep a reference CV which is a full version of your skills, attributes and experience. You can then rewrite your CV to ensure the information matches closely the positions you are applying for.

Remember, you will only get one chance with your CV to make an immediate impact with a potential employer or recruiter. Be sure to grab their attention with a CV that lets them know why they should invite you to an interview!

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Writing a Covering Letter

These days, most companies and firms will ask you to submit your CV electronically. Attach your resume to an email, and include a covering letter in your email.

Like your CV, your covering letter needs to make an immediate impact and grab the attention of its' reader. Use the letter as a self-introduction and to highlight the skills, attributes and experience most relevant to the position you are applying for.

Your letter should:

- Include the title of the position you are applying for.
- Explain how you heard about the position eg website, newspaper or referral.
- Provide at least one reason why your skills, attributes and/or experience are relevant to the position.
- Be addressed to the contact person, ensuring their name and the organisation is spelt correct.

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Guide to Interviewing

Well done on securing an interview! If your CV made a good first impression, then your interview is the one that makes the lasting impression with a recruitment consultant or potential employer.

The objective of an interview is for an employer to determine your suitability for the role and whether your attitude and motivation fits with the culture of the firm. They will be evaluating your strong and weak points, qualifications, skills and personal attributes.

Remember, an interview is a two-way process allowing you to find out more about the role and the organisation. Take the opportunity to ask questions to determine whether this is the right role for you.

Preparation

The key to your interview confidence is preparation. Your Law Staff consultant will provide you with as much information on the position, the firm, the interviewers and their interview style. To gain a winning edge over other candidates, you will first need to do your homework.

- Study the job description.
- Research the company/firm so you are familiar with their history and reputation, products/services they offer and size of the firm. Visit their website, sourcing brochures and promotional material, read newspaper reports.
- Prepare your answers to commonly asked interview questions and identify work examples that will help to demonstrate your personal attributes and capabilities. Interview techniques vary with each interviewer/firm, from informal and unstructured interviews to more in-depth behavioural interviews. [Click here for examples of common interview questions and behavioural questions and how to answer them.]
- Prepare an interview folder which includes:
 - ◆ Interview details including time, location and names of interviewers.
 - ◆ Copy of your CV, certificates/qualifications and written references.
 - ◆ Work samples that you have created or written (do not use commercially sensitive documents.)
 - ◆ The prospective job description.
 - ◆ Your questions about the job and organisation. [Click here for some useful questions.]

Getting Ready

- Check the location and the time of the interview. To avoid unnecessary stress, make sure you know where you are going ahead of time.
- Wear smart business attire for the interview, and check to see you are neat and tidy and well groomed.
- Arrive on time, or a few minutes early.
- Turn off your cell phone and put it away before you enter the building.

The Interview

- Fill out application forms neatly and complete all details required.
- Greet the interviewer(s) by name and give a firm handshake.
- Wait to be offered a chair before taking a seat. Sit upright, make eye contact, look interested and smile!
- Follow the interviewer's lead. Listen carefully to questions and ask for clarification if you don't understand.
- Relate the job to yourself, discussing your experience clearly and with relevance to the role. Explain why you are interested in the role and the firm.
- Use work examples to demonstrate your experience and keep to the point.
- Be positive, don't speak negatively about your employer, past and present, and try to think of ways of turning negatives into positives.

Your Interview Questions

Towards the end of the interview, you will usually be asked if you have any questions about the role or organisation. The questions you ask will help to indicate the level of interest you have in the role, and also allow you to determine if this is the firm for you. Questions to ask include:

- How has the position become available – expanding team or replacing someone who has left?
- What is culture of the firm/team like?
- What challenges is the firm currently facing?
- What is the next project I will be working on?
- How will you measure my success in the role?
- What opportunity is there for training (internally and externally?)
- What technology/computer packages does the company operate on?
- What career path is available in the firm?

Avoid asking questions about salary and holidays unless the interviewer brings these up. This is to show that you are interested in the role, not the benefits. If asked about salary expectations, advise them that your Law Staff consultant is aware of your expectations and to refer them to us.

Closing the Interview

Tell your interviewers directly that you are very interested in the position and working for the firm. If asked, say "yes" even if you are unsure. This will allow you time to think about the role before making a final decision.

Make sure you find out the next steps of the interview process, including when you or your consultant can expect to hear from them.

Thank the interviewers for their time and for considering your application. Give a firm handshake and make confident eye contact when doing this.

Contact Your Consultant

Call your Law Staff consultant after your interview. Your feedback on the interview will let us know of your level of interest in the role. Raise any questions or doubts with your consultant, who may be able to give you some information immediately or discuss them with the firm.

Your Law Staff consultant will provide you with feedback on the interviewers' impression of your performance in the interview. Whether you are offered the role or not, use this information to improve your interview technique.

Second Interviews

If you are invited back for a second interview, treat the interview the same as your first interview. If you are being interviewed by a different person, do not assume they have been fully briefed about you. You will need to follow the same process with the same positive attitude.