

## Cvs deconstructed: applying the killer CV technique - case study 1

In this guide we will deconstruct a real CV and suggest changes to improve the impact. [Some details have been amended for confidentiality reasons].

The [original CV](#) and the [improved CV](#) can be viewed in full.

### Summary of Original CV

Overall, this CV has many of the elements we would want to find and does not suffer from some of the [common mistakes when writing a CV](#). However, they can be enhanced to provide significantly more impact to get noticed. Remember, you only have 30 seconds of the reader's time to achieve this!

Whilst examining the CV we are looking to identify opportunities to develop changes which will improve the impact and targeting and maximize the chances of:

getting read at all.

gaining that all important interview.

Our other articles discuss in further details [how to target your CV](#) and [why a generalized CV does not work](#).

Let's look at each section in turn to see how it could potentially be improved.

### Profile

The original profile:

I am a versatile and energetic problem solver and manager. I have experience in facilities management, project management, staff management, system design and software development. With fifteen years experience in Information Technology I am looking to take my expertise into an organisation requiring a manager focusing on end user requirements.

This is not targeted to a specific opportunity. It describes a range of skills that can be offered and invites the reader to select one of these goodies from the sweet-jar.

An agency does not place an advert for an all in one 'Facilities Manager, Project Manager, Staff Manager, System Designer, Software Developer' so we need to target what they want to hear. For the sake of brevity we will assume the target position is Project Manager.

In the advertised vacancy it will probably define experience required and industry sector. We need to ensure that the profile will capture their attention in about 5 seconds (yes, really!).

One last point is that it is better format to drop the word 'I'.

A revised profile might look like this:

Versatile and very successful **PROJECT MANAGER** with a wealth of technical and commercial skills acquired across a wide range of demanding roles with over 10 years experience within the insurance and commodities sector. Now seeking next challenging and rewarding opportunity to demonstrate substantial abilities and make an effective contribution in a successful, end user focused team.

So, we dropped the use of 'I', targeted it towards a particular position and put in some words and phrases that matched the job description. We also capitalized and made bold the job seekers main skill title to match that of the advert.

Now, let's look at the next area on this all important front page.

### Expertise

The original expertise:

Microsoft Office

Microsoft Windows

UNIX implementation and administration

Systems Analysis

Systems Design

Network Design & Implementation

Business Analysis	Macro Programming	InfoBASIC
Perl	Account Management	Report Writing for technicians and end users
Staff Management	Change management	Studying for Security+

As written, this reads more like a list of courses and training which have been attended and does not effectively describe all the skills that will match the job title Project Manager in the profile. Note that courses and training would be better placed in a section on the second page.

The expertise should describe a list of skills you have that are directly relevant to the position to which you are applying. It should also have a combination of skills, both technical and personal.

Here's a revised version:

Powerful **project planning** and implementation skills - delivery focused.

Skilled with MS Office, Windows and UNIX implementation and administration.

**Full project life cycle** : configuration management and change management.

Systems design and software development skills for insurance and commodity trading.

Reliably **meets demanding deadlines** and targets working under pressure.

Track record of academic achievement and career development – fluent in German.

Effective communication and negotiation techniques – skilled in **account management**.

...and so on. You need about 10 bullet points here

Notice that we have used bullet points for more readability. For the items that are most relevant we have put them in bold to make them stand out during a quick visual scan.

Note that if we were looking to target a systems designer role we would amend the profile and expertise list to suit. The golden rule is always tell them what they want hear and not your life story.

The only remaining section to add to the high impact front page is achievements.

## Achievements

This is completely missing from the original CV and is probably the most important section of the front page. It shows you have used your skills and expertise to deliver some benefit for who you have worked for.

There are some clues in the work history and we can use some of these to develop some achievements like this:

Played lead role in successful initiative to rapidly expand client base to twelve clients across twenty sites and generate half of company's annual revenues.

Used extensive technical skills and experience to develop bespoke software packages which gained competitive edge in insurance and commodities market.

The achievements section is one of the hardest sections to write. We have dedicated another entire article on explaining [How to write an achievement on your CV](#).

Let's now move on to page two and we open this with –

## Career History

Here's part of the original section:

### XYZ COMPUTERS LTD 1989 – 1994

XYZ Computers Ltd provides subscription and advertising management software to the magazine publishing industry. At my time at the company I had a customer based role, spending much time on site making bespoke changes to software systems. The systems programming role developed as the company undertook a project to convert the bureau system from a legacy mainframe platform to an open UNIX base.

#### Systems Programmer

UNIX systems programmer on an application conversion project.

Create job and print managing systems familiar to VMS operators.

Automate the conversion of legacy JCL script to UNIX shell script.

Created a JCL script generator for UNIX.

#### Programmer

Specify and code changes to the standard subscription packages.

Specify and code bespoke modules as defined by clients.

Liaised with clients at board level regarding change requirements.

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The original section of the career history is on the whole pretty good. There are a few areas for improvement:

Remove the use of 'I'.

Rather than writing sentences it is easier to read in bullet form and boiled down to the essentials, making some words bold so they stand out when scan read.

Here's an improved version:

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1994 – Present	Director of Facilities Management	ABC Software, London
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Software and FM solutions for Lloyd's insurance brokers and commodities traders</li><li>Provide consultancy and bespoke software solutions – <b>negotiate at board level</b></li><li><b>Successfully expanded department</b> to service twelve clients over twenty sites</li><li>Grew profitable client revenues to generate half the company's annual revenue</li><li>Technical consultancy and translate client requirements into technical specifications</li><li><b>Account management responsibilities</b> and day to day technical assistance to staff</li><li>Manage and develop eleven staff, budgets and growth in line with objectives</li><li>Develop opportunities and <b>ensure highest levels of client service satisfaction</b></li><li><b>Outstanding job performance</b> gained series of career promotions</li></ul>	
	<b>Associate Director</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Created and developed</b> very successful the facilities management department</li><li>Provided high level account management for a variety of company clients</li><li>Carried out specialist project work relating to software systems integration</li></ul>	
	<b>Analyst/Programmer</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Software systems design</b> for insurance and commodity trading packages</li><li>Software development for insurance and commodity trading packages</li></ul>	

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## Education

This section is well written. It simply lists degrees and A levels without giving address of schools and colleges and years attended.

## Training and Development

The original CV does not have one. It would be the place to list all the relevant courses and training.

## Interests / Personal

The content is fine, although it might be worth swapping 'divorced' to single and removing the boxes for readability.

## Miscellaneous

The repeat of the personal details at the top of the second page can be removed. It is not required and uses valuable space as we want to get the whole CV onto two pages only.

## Conclusion

The original CV has many elements to commend it, however, with some selective enhancements to the profile, expertise and achievements sections we can dramatically improve the impact on the reader and get that all important interview.

## Your CV Deconstructed?

If you would like us to deconstruct your CV in a future article then please email it to us at [cvsdeconstructed@ContractorCalculator.co.uk](mailto:cvsdeconstructed@ContractorCalculator.co.uk). All names and work references are changed to ensure anonymity.

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