

How to convert your expat résumé into a UK contractor's high impact, 'killer' CV

Expat contractors who want to get noticed by an agent, so they will then be put forward to a client for an [interview](#), must first convert their résumé into a [UK contractor Curriculum Vitae](#), or CV.

Contractors provide a business-to-business service to their clients, and like any business they need effective sales and marketing materials. For any contractor working in the UK, their sales literature is the [high impact](#), or '[killer](#)' CV. And this is why contractor CVs are very different from the CVs used by workers seeking permanent work as an employee.

Agents who advertise for contractors to apply for contracts normally have to filter through tens to hundreds of contractor CVs, and if they don't see exactly the information they require, the CV is quickly discarded.

What must be included in a contractor's CV?

[Contractor's killer CVs](#) must be [structured](#) to immediately display the information an agent and client needs to see. This should be in a standard format, so the agent and client know where to look for specific information about the contractor.

The key items to include are:

The contractor's profile

The contractor's relevant skills and expertise

The contractor's relevant achievements

Previous relevant clients, with the skills used and on that contract and outcomes achieved

Confirmation of the right to work in the UK

Relevant education, training and hobbies.

A contractor CV should be no more than two single-sided pages of A4. The [profile](#), skills and experience plus [achievements](#) must be on the front page. The rest of the information should be on the second page.

Even with decades of experience and hugely impressive skill sets, unless a contractor can communicate this information and sell themselves, they simply will not win any contracts; it's not the best contractors who win the best contracts, it's the contractors who are best at winning contracts who get the work.

Contractor CV front page

Contractors have just a few seconds to make an impact with the front page – that's one sheet of A4. If what jumps out is that the contractor loves the films of Arnold Schwarzenegger and has a clean International Driver Licence, then it will be rejected, which usually means being 'filed' in the rubbish bin.

The front page must immediately tell the agent or client that the contractor:

Has the skills they are looking for

Has successfully applied those skills with other clients or a former employer

Has provided business value for previous clients or employers.

To achieve this, the front page must include:

The contractor's name, address and contact details – three lines

A profile of the contractor – four lines

A list of skills and expertise – about ten bullet points

A list of achievements – about five bullet points.

Any other information is surplus to requirements and could distract the agent or client from finding the information they really want. No matter how proud the contractor may be that they won an Olympic medal, or was a former government minister, if it's not relevant to the specific contract they are applying for, it should be left out.

Contractor CV second page

If the agent or client is looking at the second page, the contractor has done well and the agent or client liked what they saw. So it's hugely important, having done so well to get to persuade the reader to get to the second page, for the contractor not to mess it up now.

The second page is all about reassurance. The agent or client knows from the front page that they have someone with the right skills and profile. They now want to know that the contractor:

Has worked for the right kind of organisations, preferably in the same industry

Has had past contracts renewed, showing the contractor has staying power, or a good employment track record if this is the first contract

Has effectively and successfully applied the skills and expertise listed on the front page.

This is also where a contractor can include details of education, training and hobbies, but it must be kept very compact and relevant. If a contractor has several years of relevant experience, then their education can become increasingly irrelevant to the reader of their CV.

Targeting CVs

Expat contractors should **target their CVs** specifically for each contract opportunity. This means only including those skills and past work experiences that are relevant to the contract that the contractor is applying for.

Creating a high impact CV is probably one of the most important first steps a new contractor will take to winning their first contract. Get this wrong, and the contractor might never win a contract, no matter how outstanding their skills are.

It is possible for a contractor to pay a CV writing agency to create a CV for them. This is a worthwhile option to consider for first-time expat contractors. However, the contractor should ensure that the CV writing agency is experienced at creating contractor CVs, as these are very different from regular CVs used by job-seekers applying for permanent jobs as employees.

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