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Cvs deconstructed: applying the killer CV technique – case study 2

This is our second guide (see **first article**) where we deconstruct a real CV and suggest changes to improve the impact and target it directly at the role being applied for. Note that some details have been amended for confidentiality reasons.

The **original 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, it 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**.

Before we look at each section lets look at the description of a job which the contractor is intending on applying for.

The Job Target

Title: Senior Consultant / Project Manager
Description: Our client is a leading independent technology and licensing company and are looking for an experienced Senior Consultant / Project Manager.

You must be able to:

Work with scientific/technical customers to understand their needs.

Liaise with core product developers to understand current capability and to feedback new ideas/requirements.

Lead a team of developers to deliver a custom solution based on the core products.

You will have:

Good customer facing skills.

Significant team leading experience.

Serious technical credibility in object orientated software design and implementation.

1st or 2.1 degree in relevant subject

Now, let's look at each section in turn to see how it could potentially be improved to maximize the chances of getting to the interviewing stage.

Profile

The original profile:

IT Manager/Programmer with wide ranging skill set applied for the past 15 years in high pressure factory and trackside motorsport environments.

This could do with some more substance and also needs to be addressing the job target which isn't anything to do with trackside motorsports.

Let's enhance it by stealing some phrases from the job description. A revised profile might look like this:

Experienced SENIOR CONSULTANT / PROJECT MANAGER with 15 years experience aquired in a series of demanding roles within the IT arena. Now seeking next challenging and rewarding opportunity to demonstrate abilities in a successful customer focused team.

We put in 'Experienced' from the job advert together with the job title (now capitalized), and mentioned we wanted to be client facing. We also dropped the motor sports wording since it is irrelevant.

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

Expertise

The original expertise:

Project management

Software development – VB6, Matlab, MSAccess, MSExcel

Software installation/support – Win XP, Win2000, NT, Win9x, MS Office, Exchange, Great Plains Dynamics, MFW Max , Backup Exec, McAfee Antivirus

Hardware support/build/repair

Data acquisition/analysis – Pi V6, Pi Sigma, Magnetti Marelli, Motec, EFI, Stack

Seven Post Rig testing – Dynamic Suspensions DAWS

Lap Simulations – Sera Callas 3x

Mechanical Simulations – Msc.Working Model 2D, Msc.VisualNastran Working Model 4D

Accident Analysis/Reconstruction

This list is good in itself, but it could target the role better. 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 suggested revised version:

Powerful project planning and implementation skills - delivery focused.

Full project life cycle: configuration management and change management.

Requirements analysis and specification.

Software development – VB6, MSAccess, MSExcel.

Object Orientated Design – UML.

Software installation/support – Win XP / 2000 / NT / 9x, Office, Exchange, McAfee.

Hardware support/build/repair

Reliably meets demanding deadlines and targets working under pressure.

Effective communication and negotiation techniques – skilled in account management.

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

So, we have taken out some of the more obscure skills that are irrelevant to the target. If however, further positions are applied for that require the skills then they need to go back in. Remember that generalized CVs do not work. The golden rule is always tell them what they want hear and not your life story.

The skills have been more focused towards project management and consulting. Some additional ones have been added that compliment the requirements for liaising with clients to establish requirements. A technical one for OO was added, since the contractor has that skill which was omitted. We have also added some personal skills.

Achievements

A selection from the original text:

Project managed company wide upgrade of hardware and software infrastructure with porting of telephone exchange through Cat5 and optical fibre. Network hardware was replaced and expanded from a 10 user Novell system to a Microsoft NT based network with, initially, 200 ports and then with later expansion to approximately 400 ports. Simultaneously, software changes involved installation of new a ERP system with upgrade of user pc's to a homogenous Windows operating system and application suites. Further changes involved the implementation of strategies for backup, disaster recovery, business continuity, and security using software and hardware as required. Responsible for budget during upgrade period.

Creation of IT department as manager with three staff. Responsible for selection / employment of staff.

Trackside IT support for several categories of motor racing including F1, F3000, WSC, and Group C.

This area needs much attention.

Firstly, it is too big to digest and spills over to the second page. Remember the first page gets scanned quickly and not fully read.

Secondly, none of the points are actual achievements. Instead they are a list of things that have been done. The content itself is good, but it belongs in the descriptions for the roles in the employment section.

An achievement is something that you have done using your expertise, which had a measurable effect for your client which an associated benefit.

Here's a suggestion for an achievement for the CV based on the information contained in the original:

Co-managed implementation of improvements in operation techniques and data analysis resulting in the client achieving a top 10 position out of 200 within their field. This led to an increase in sponsorship of 500%.

Three more achievements are required that demonstrate you have used your skills (the ones that match the job spec) to achievement a measurable result for the client.

Bear in mind that 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:

ABC Racing   April 04 - May04
IT Consultant / Data Analyst

LeMans prototypes trackside IT support

F123 Racing   March 04 - April 04
Wind Tunnel Control Systems Support Engineer

Installation/configuration of network video camera system with development of VB6 tool for viewing

XYZ International   Jan 98 - Oct 2003
IT Manager Project managed IT upgrade during creation of IT department

Seven Post Rig Manager Managed commissioning/operation of facility

Computational Engineer Software development/Simulations/Data analysis/Accident reconstruction

This section is a little thin. Each recent role (within the last 5 years) needs fleshing out to demonstrate the gained experience that is relevant to the role being advertised. It would also be worth toning down the racing related work since the target market is different.

Here's an example of an improved version:

2001 – Present   Project Manager ABC Software, London
(2 renewals)
Project managed team of 10 to deliver bespoke data capture and analysis software.

Liaised with clients to establish requirements and ensure project was on track at each milestone.

Delivered at 90% of budget, and one month early.

Education

This is fine.

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

Your marital status and mobility is irrelevant and can be removed.

References

These should be left off. Your ex employers will not appreciate getting phone calls from hungry agents looking to get leads to fill positions. Simply state they are available on request. References should really only be given after an initial interview. Agents often try and gain these from you early on the pretence of their 'quality of service standards'. This is an old trick and the truth is they are just chasing down opportunities. Remember that if you are available then you might have left a position open elsewhere.

Conclusion

The original CV has good content although some of it is in the wrong places. The achievements section needs an overhaul and the CV needs to be targeted towards the particular role.

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**. All names and work references are changed to ensure anonymity.

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