

Effective CV Writing

A Guide to Writing Job-Winning CV



A few tips to help you write that job-winning CV and break into tech.

We know that building a career can be tough. It's even worse when you don't have a guide to help you. So, we wrote this eBook for you.

This book will teach you more about CV writing, how to get a recruiter's attention and more.

This book is the guide you need to write job-winning CVs.

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This book is a compilation of tips and learnings from our webinar with Adedolapo Lawal, a Programs Associate at Ingressive for Good.

INTRODUCTION

Dear I4Gee,

Have you ever seen a vacancy on LinkedIn that got thousands of applicants within only a few hours of the notification? Imagine you were a hiring manager, and you had to review each and every one of those applications to select the most suitable candidates for the role. How long would you dedicate to each application? Now divide that number by five because that's probably how much time a reviewer will spend on your CV if you cannot grab their attention in the first few seconds.

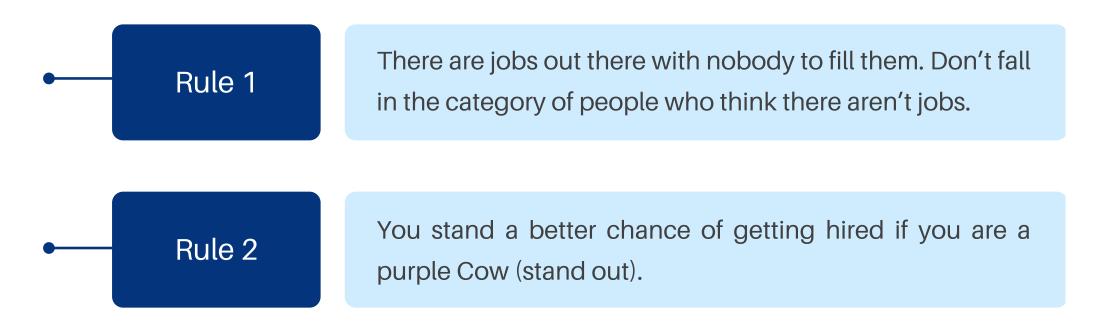


In fact, according to a <u>research by CareerBuilder</u>, about 24% of hiring managers spend less than 30 seconds looking at a resume. **Can your current CV** catch the attention of a recruiter in 30 seconds?

Employers and human resource managers in various industries look for their perfect candidates every day. Still, it's hard to know just how great a candidate is with a simple one or two-pager containing details about who they are and what they've done(which may or may not be true).

Imagine seeing a herd of cows; nothing unusual there, right? Now imagine seeing a purple cow in their midst. The unusuality of that cow will make it stand out. You'll remember it and even tell everyone you saw a purple cow. That's precisely the impression you want to make on your hiring manager. Therefore, you and your application need to stand out for the right things in the sea of applications a hiring manager receives.

You might be an exceptional data analyst, an incredible digital marketer, or a proficient technical writer. However, if your CV does not communicate all these things, you'll keep being turned down.



INTRODUCTION

This eBook is going to show you how to create a CV that stands out amongst others. One that is the purple cow in the herd. We have compiled tips from our Webinar with Adedolapo Lawal, a Programs Associate at Ingressive for Good who has gained experience editing resumes and reviewing CVs.

So don't just read this book and put it aside; learn from it and create a CV that proves that you can get the job done. We know you can do it, and we cannot wait to celebrate your soon-to-come offer letter.

Wishing you the best, Let's do this!!!

With Love, Ingressive for Good.

A MESSAGE FROM ADEDOLAPO

Hello,

My name is Adedolapo Lawal. I am a Programs Associate at Ingressive for Good. Very early in my life, I got a scholarship to a career advancement fellowship program where I learned how to build an ATS-friendly resume, cover letter, personal statement essays, interview preparation, and other career-related subjects. I was also assigned a career mentor who taught me so much about writing and curating a CV to access global opportunities. The CVs and resumes I wrote, curated, and reviewed were so good that people started to pay me for them. People came back excitedly to tell me how it helped them get their dream jobs.

Since then, I have edited a lot of resumes, CVs, and cover letters. So I know what it takes to write a good resume or CV. A lot of times, the two are used interchangeably. However, there's actually a difference. A resume briefly summarises your academic and professional experience, skills, and accomplishments. It is very concise, usually a one-page document or, at most, one and a half pages. So it focuses more on your work experience and the skills you want to communicate, while a CV is a comprehensive description of your academic and professional experience as it relates to the role you're applying for. It has more details than a resume. It can also include your achievements, awards, and publications.

Another difference is that in English, the Americans refer to this document as a resume, while the British call it a Curriculum Vitae (CV). I've seen people go from having poorly written resumes/CVs to building impressive ones that get them invited for interviews.

I understand that you may be transitioning into tech from a non-tech background. You will find this book very helpful. The tips here will help you build an outstanding CV and resume, irrespective of your previous work experience. I once had a client who wanted to apply for the position of cabin crew personnel, and all she had was an experience as a waiter. I helped her tailor her CV to fit the job description. We highlighted the transferable skills from her job as a waiter and emphasized the value she would bring to the company as a cabin crew personnel. I was overjoyed when she got the job! Within Ingressive for Good, I have helped some of our Alumni community members review their CVs; today, they have jobs.

Stories like this make my day, and that's why I enjoy sharing tips to help young Africans improve their CVs. So please learn and practice the tips put together in this book. That's the only way they will work for you.

I am rooting for you, Adedolapo Lawal.

CHAPTER ONE

Why Building a CV is Important

What are the benefits of building a strong CV

WHY BUILDING A CV IS IMPORTANT

Imagine shopping for a clothing item on an e-commerce site with the goal of buying the best one you can afford. You might find yourself with a wide range of options. When you want to choose from an array of products to purchase, you may scan through each of them and select the best one based on certain qualities you have in mind. When there are too many, you often will only look at the ones that manage to grab your attention. It is the same thing with job hunting. Your hiring manager is shopping for the best talent they can afford, and their first contact with you might be your CV. Think of your CV as a professional marketing material curated to help you sell yourself to your potential employer as the best candidate.

Your CV is that tool that will help you grab the attention of hiring managers and stand out in the midst of many applicants. It is your passport to your new job. It allows you to showcase what you can do and the value you can bring to any company/organization you apply to.

It's essential that you put in your best when creating your CV. Your CV speaks volumes. It says a lot about you beyond words. Typos may signify that you don't pay attention to details. You always have to put your best foot forward. You want to avoid coming off as a candidate who would only sometimes be their best and does not prioritize excellence.

Remember that your CV is the only thing you're being judged by at this time. Put your best foot forward and increase your chances of getting your dream job!

In summary, a well-written CV will:

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Help you make a great first impression on the recruiter(s).

Increase your chances of getting an invitation to the interview phase.

Enable an easy and interesting conversation between you and the recruiter because you have included the necessary detail.

Create an excellent overall impression of you to the recruiter(s).

Show your potential employer why they should hire you and the benefits of having you on their team.

CHAPTER TWO

CV/Resume Formats

CV formats and how to choose them

CV/RESUME FORMATS

There are three main formats you can use when creating your CV. These formats will help you decide how you arrange your CV to make it appealing and easy to understand.

The Chronological CV

You can use this format if you would like to highlight your work and academic experiences in reverse order. This means your most recent work experience comes first and is arranged from current/recent to past. This format highlights the duration of time you were in each role. It is advisable to use this format if you do not have long time gaps without work experience in your CV.

The Functional CV

The functional format highlights your work and academic experiences without including the time frame you were at a job. It may highlight the years but not the duration. However, highlighting a timeframe is not necessary. It also lays more emphasis on your skills than your work experience. When using the functional CV format, you should include a section that provides a list of skills you have.

You can also include a section to spotlight the clients you have worked with if you were a freelancer or worked with multiple clients within your job. This format is best used when there's a long time gap of unemployment in your CV because it takes the attention off the time spent with and without a job to the work you've been able to do.

The Combination CV

Just like the name implies, this format combines the chronological and functional CV formats. With this, your work experiences, academic experiences and skills are highlighted separately in your CV.

Whatever format you decide to use, highlight the experiences and skills most relevant to the organization and role you're applying for.

CHAPTER THREE

Components of a CV/Resume

What to Include in your CV or Resume

When curating a good CV or resume, specific information and details shouldn't be left out. For example, you don't want to create a super amazing CV and miss out on providing a way for you to be contacted.

Here, you'll find a list of things you must include in your CV.

Personal Information

Your personal information should include your name (First name and surname), home address (it doesn't have to be super detailed, it could just highlight the city and country. For example, your address can be Nairobi, Kenya), your email address and your active phone number. Always include your area code to your phone number. This is important if you are applying to companies outside your country. For example, +234 is the area code for Nigeria, +256 for Uganda, and +254 for Kenya. So, if you're living in Nigeria, your phone number should be written as +234 81XXXXXXXXX. If you're living in Kenya, your phone number should be written as +254 71XXXXXXXXX.

Professional Summary

A professional summary is a two to three-line summary of the skills you have and the value you can offer. You need to be clear and concise when writing this part of your CV. It can also be called objective(s). You might not add this to a resume, but it is necessary when writing a CV. When writing this section, you must ensure the information on your CV/resume aligns with the role you're applying for. For example, your professional summary can be;



"Competent Data Analyst with knowledge in data mining and structures, statistical intelligence, business data needs, and analysis. Adept at understanding clients' requirements and translating them into actionable project plans to provide solutions. Goal-Oriented with a passion for business intelligence and machine learning models."

The aim is to creatively let the recruiter know your skills and how you can bring value to the company with these skills.

Educational Background/Academic Experience

This is information about your academic background. It may include details of your previous education, such as the name of institutions attended, degree attained, etc. For example, University of Ghana, Accra Ghana B.Sc Industrial Chemistry.

This is not limited to university education alone. You can also include certifications you have gained, e.g. Statement of Accomplishment, DataCamp. If you're doing this, you should attach a copy of your certificate to your application email or, if there is a spot in the form to submit other documents. You can also generate a web link (including a visible Google Drive link) for the file and hyperlink it as proof.

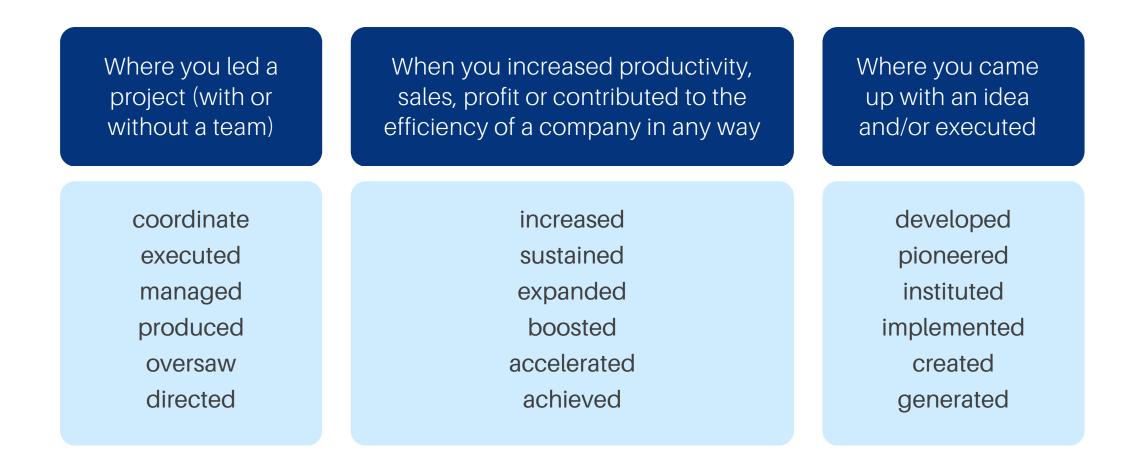
The aim of this section is to show that you have gained some valuable educational experience (formal or informal) that would help you carry out your tasks effectively.

Professional/ Work Experience

You should highlight key aspects of your previous work experience in this section of your CV. Don't just copy and paste the job description of your last role. You need to write out key things you achieved and contributed to. Think about the value you created. How did your presence in the company impact your colleagues, revenue, customers, etc.? Was there growth, retention, etc.? Was there quantitative or qualitative growth? Can you measure your impact? If you can, include the measurement. Communicate your responsibilities in three or five bullet points using this approach:



With this, you can use action words to describe tasks you carried out and the quantifiable quantitative/qualitative results you got. There are a variety of words you can use when writing your CV. Here are some use cases and words to use;



Try not to overuse a particular word. It would help prove that you have excellent communication skills. Also, ensure that you write these sentences in the past tense to emphasise the fact that these were activities you did. These are some examples that will better help you write your own:

These are some examples that will better help you write your own:

- Increased customer signup by 10% using a strategic marketing plan, utilized excellent communication skills to foster client relationships and enhance client retention.
- Aligned with the tour manager to redesign and research revenue goals, create, manage and execute sales strategy, which increased brand productivity and sales by 60%.
- Documented weekly reports on the diagnostic and repair operations for proper documentation and improvement analysis.
- Managed database of community members in an accurate and timely manner to ensure operations run effectively.

By including numbers and percentages in your CV/resume, you can give specific values that show you are great at what you do.

If you're switching careers from one industry to another, you can write about the skills you gained from your previous job and how they can help the company. For instance, if you used to work as a Customer Success Representative and want to switch to product management, your interpersonal skills and communication skills when attending to customers will be useful when interacting with users to get feedback.

An important tip is to list skills you have gained from your previous work experience in your CV. Skills such as communication, problem-solving, organisation, research, time management, and creativity are valuable in almost any role.

Awards/ Achievements

If you have gotten any awards in the past, include them in your CV. For example, if you were the best-graduating student in your university, an employee of the month in your previous place of employment, or I4G ambassador of the year, you can include them. You can explain what that award entails if it's not a globally known award. As long as it's relevant to the job role, let the employer know you're an asset to the company.

Other things that can be included in your CV

- Tools: While it's not compulsory, including a list of tools you're familiar with in a section of your CV could be great for you. It can help your hiring manager determine your proficiency in a tool, which could be a bonus. For example, if you are a Graphic Designer, being proficient with tools like Canva, Microsoft Office, Photoshop, and Figma would be a great addition to your CV because they are relevant to your role. Make sure you are completely honest. You do not have to lie. If you find yourself feeling bad about not being proficient with a tool, you can learn it or strengthen your capacity in the tools you are already proficient with.
- Language: Being proficient in languages such as English, French, Spanish, Swahili, etc., can be an advantage if it's relevant to the role you're applying for. You can also describe your proficiency in the language with terms like beginner, intermediate, A1, B2, fluent, etc., e.g. Swahili (Intermediate), English (Fluent), French(beginner).
- Reference: This section contains the contact details of one or two people you have worked with who would be willing to speak to the hiring manager about your work and confirm some of the things you have said in the CV. Remember that your hiring manager might contact whoever you include as your referee. They may be asked about your character, track record and their experience working with you. It's best to inform anyone you include as your referee so they are prepared for any calls or emails they might receive. Ensure the contact information you provide is active before you include it in your CV/resume.
- Publications/Projects: You can embed links to your portfolio, social media accounts you've worked on, your LinkedIn profile, your publications, or a project you have worked on. This helps the hiring manager/ recruiter get a better sense of what you're capable of doing.

CHAPTER FOUR

Red Flags in CV/Resume

Some red flags potential employers may spot on your CV

RED FLAGS IN CV/RESUME

According to <u>StandOut CV</u>, Research shows that recruiters spend **6-8 seconds** reviewing a CV before deciding whether it is suitable for a vacancy. As a result, 80% of CVs do not get shortlisted by recruiters, meaning they do not make it past the first screen.

80% CVs don't get

shortlisted

11%
Applicants considered suitable

Recruiters say that they spend anywhere between 8 seconds and 15 minutes reviewing a CV, depending on the CV's ability to hold their attention. On average, only 11% of applicants are considered suitable for the roles they are applying to. These statistics show why recruiters reject resumes.

59%

of Recruiters

Reject a candidate due to spelling errors or poor grammar

>40%

of Recruiters

become disinterested when there's unnecessary design, inappropriate font styles, images, or even use of emojis!

>50%

of Recruiters

Reject a candidate if their resume is not authentic.

Here are some of the red flags to avoid:

- Unnecessary designs: Your CV should be simple and clear. Some templates are not generally accepted in all parts of the world. If you must use a template, make sure it's not too colourful, playful, or filled with unnecessary designs, except if you are applying for a design job and want to showcase your design capabilities. Even then, keep the design minimal and subtle in a way that does not interfere with crucial information. Clear fonts like Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica, etc., in size 12 often work best.
- Spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors: Pay attention to your spelling, grammar and punctuation. Most recruiters have hundreds, if not thousands, of CVs to look through within a short time. Therefore, you need to make sure the information on your CV is not difficult to read and understand. State your point clearly, read it more than once, and if possible, get someone to help you proofread before sending it. You can also make use of free editing tools such as Grammarly.

RED FLAGS IN CV/RESUME

- Unprofessional email address: Your email address has to be professional if you want to be taken seriously. Most recruiters would frown at unprofessional email addresses. Use your real name when creating one. For instance, if your name is Adebola Nkrumah, adebolankrumah@gmail.com you can use or nkrumahadebola@gmail.com. You can also add a number or an extra alphabet example, adebolankrumah1@gmail.com, bolankrumah1@gmail.com, for ankrumah@gmail.com, and bolannkrumah@gmail.com. Whatever style you choose, avoid using nicknames. No recruiter will take a tinyfairy@gmail.com seriously unless, of course, your name is Tiny Fairy (which it most likely isn't).
- **Unprofessional Photos**: If a photo is requested, ensure it is a clear professional headshot. Don't use pictures of you with playful poses, filters, busy backgrounds or blurred portraits. Keep it clean, clear, and professional.
- Employment Gaps: Long time gaps between one employment time and another in your CV may get the recruiter worried. They could question why you left the previous job and remained unemployed for a long period of time. If this is the case, include projects you worked on whether it was on your own or with a group of people. It could be volunteer or freelance opportunities you took advantage of. If you are unemployed, try not to stay idle, volunteer, take on projects, take a course, and do your best to keep improving yourself.

The job search process can be very daunting and a resume with one or more of the red flags listed above makes it even harder.

These red flags impede your chances of getting to the next stage of the recruitment process. By avoiding them, you can get your CV the attention it deserves and be one step closer to getting the jobs you want.

CHAPTER FIVE

What Hiring Managers look out for

5 things employers look out for when hiring

WHAT HIRING MANAGERS LOOK OUT FOR

Some employers in the tech space were asked about the things they look out for when hiring new employees, and they shared some insightful tips which we have put together in this chapter. As you read, evaluate yourself to identify what you need to improve on.

Self Motivation

Employers don't enjoy micromanaging employees. It adds more work to what they may already have on their desks. When they come across a CV/Resume of someone who has worked on personal projects, it shows leadership skills, proves the person is self-motivated, and would require little or no supervision when hired. Getting involved in projects is a great way to prove you have this skill. Ensure you add links to projects you've worked on and your portfolio in your CV.

Integrity

Being trustworthy is such a vital attribute, even in the workplace. Nobody wants to work with someone that lacks integrity. Lying in your CV is one of the fastest ways to get you off the list of potential employees. So make sure you're honest about your claims. Don't give people reasons to doubt your credibility. It's okay to admit your weaknesses. The most important thing is that you're open to learning.

Know the Basics

No one expects you to know it all, but you should have good knowledge about your industry, the organization and the basics of your job. If some essential skills are relevant to your job, start learning them. You can also share your learning progress when you get a chance to be interviewed. Be intentional about including a link to your certifications, portfolio, and projects you've been involved in to showcase what you can do.

Leadership

Even if you're joining the organization as an intern, you need to show how you've developed skills that would help you manage resources, situations and even people as you work towards meeting the organization's goals. In addition, having this skill shows you are ready to grow career-wise and take up more responsibilities.

WHAT HIRING MANAGERS LOOK OUT FOR

Adaptability

Change is inevitable. Adaptability is your ability to adjust and accommodate these changes. It could be changes made to ideas, job descriptions, or industry trends. Employers look out for people eager to learn new things, fast learners, and committed to self-improvement. As you grow in an organization, challenges will come, and employers will expect you to think of solutions.

Collaboration

If you intend to work with an organization or company, you need to work with a team of people, whether small or large, which requires good collaboration skills. To excel in this, you must learn to collaborate and leverage other people's skills and expertise to produce effective results. An excellent way to show you have this skill in your resume/CV is by including projects you've worked on with others.

Communication

Irrespective of your career path, you need to be good at communication. This involves oral and written communication skills. You can show you have this skill through your written CV and during the interview. Communication goes both ways. You must be a good listener too, and always respond appropriately.

CHAPTER SIX

Impact Stories

Meet our CV writing challenge winners

THE STORY OF CHIDERA PRISCILLA

I grew up taking care of my five siblings, so I have always been independent. Being the first daughter in my family gave me a sense of responsibility, and I learned to make sacrifices really early in my life. While in University, I needed to support myself, so earning an income became a priority. I would do assignments for my classmates and teach tutorials. I also started selling bricks, tiles and other building materials at some point to earn more money. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, I lost my income sources and could not work.



I spent most of my time caring for my siblings and supporting my parents. Most of my classmates started learning tech skills during the lockdown. I would see their posts about the skills they were learning online. Some were already making money. I got interested, started reading about tech opportunities, and then stumbled on Product Management.

I wanted to learn more and build skills in Product Management, but I didn't have a laptop or the money to pay for a course. It made me feel bad, so I decided that after the lockdown, I would work harder to raise some money as soon as school resumed. Unfortunately, ASUU went on strike, and we couldn't resume school. I felt stuck! I was depressed because I felt I wasn't moving forward. When the strike was called off, I resumed school and started making money from menial jobs again, so I was able to save up money to get a laptop. I found out about I4G and signed up for their newsletters, hoping I would get a scholarship to learn Product Management because I couldn't afford the courses I found on my own.

My laptop got stolen a few days into my final year project defence. I was so devastated. It felt like I was back to zero. During that period, I got an email from I4G Circles (the student community) about the CV writing challenge, so I registered for it. I saw it as an opportunity to prepare myself for the labour market. I gave it my best, watched videos, and read blogs to help me create an outstanding CV. To my surprise, I was among the winners of the challenge! This gave me hope again. I felt like I could get back up and try again. I even got swags from I4G. It was the motivation I needed at that point.

I have now graduated from the University and I feel confident to start applying for jobs with the CV I have created. I also help my friends rewrite their CVs. I feel empowered, and I look forward to exploring opportunities in tech with I4G.

THE STORY OF THEOGENE HARERIMANA

While studying for my Master's degree in Engineering, I realized having skills in Data would give me an edge when applying for job opportunities. During my Postgraduate study, we were mostly taught theories and barely any practical application. I figured out early that I could be a different kind of Engineer. I love mathematics and numbers, so I was fascinated by Data Science and Analysis. My goal was to find interesting ways to build skills in data and merge those skills with my Engineering knowledge to give me a competitive edge above my peers in the job market.



So I started looking for opportunities to learn online. Most courses were expensive, but I didn't let that discourage me.

I found out about the I4GDataCamp scholarship program through a friend's post on social media, so I applied and was selected. I was so ecstatic. I immediately started learning. I am still enrolled in the program and can confidently say I am learning so much from it. I have learned various ways to apply my data skills in the Engineering sector. I noticed I4G always provides opportunities for African youths, so I joined the community. I also joined I4G Circles, Ingressive for Good's student community, and that was how I found out about the CV Writing Challenge. The CV Writing Challenge was announced at the right time because I had just started searching for job opportunities. So I registered for it to learn to build a CV that would put me in an excellent position to be hired. I was excited when I was announced as one of the winners of the challenge.

I used the same CV to apply for a job at Bboxx in Rwanda and got a job offer as a Data Analyst. I have been able to apply the skills I'm currently learning in the I4GDataCamp scholarship program in my current job. I feel confident that when I complete my scholarship, I can update my CV with the skills I have gained, so I can apply for higher positions. It was really fascinating that even though I have not completed the program, I have amassed so much knowledge and built skills that have landed me a job. It was a real confidence booster. I am excited about the future and grateful to I4G for giving me these opportunities.

THE STORY OF BABATUNDE BADEJO

I found out about tech from my friends in school. I was attracted to tech because of the opportunities and the flexible nature of careers in tech. So I started reading about the opportunities I could leverage in tech and fell in love with UI/UX design. Unfortunately, I couldn't afford to pay for courses. So I started practising with free resources until a friend told me about I4G. I immediately signed up for the I4G newsletters and joined the community. I also joined the I4G student community - I4G Circles.



One day, I received an email from the student community about the I4G CV writing challenge, and I immediately registered. It was timely because I needed to start applying to law firms for my final year undergraduate internship.

I was so excited when I was announced as the challenge winner. It felt so good to receive such recognition and high praise from an organization I admire. With the knowledge I have gained from the challenge, I now help people write their CVs. Some have even gotten jobs using the CV I helped them create. I am glad that I can impact people so positively. Thank you, Ingressive for Good.

FINAL WORDS FROM ADEDOLAPO

Hello,

Thank you for reading this eBook. As a reward for coming this far, here is a free tip if you are applying for roles in large organizations: recruiters use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to shortlist candidates. These systems collect information, organize prospects based on experience and skillsets using specific keywords peculiar to the role and filter applicants.

Follow these steps to ensure your resume is effectively customized:

- Study the job description and use specific keywords that match the job category.
- Include the relevant skills.
- Include necessary certifications.
- Take note of the job title and requirements to ensure your CV/resume is tailored accordingly.

Finally, your resume or CV is a living document that needs to be updated continually as you advance in your career and gain more experience and knowledge. So, spend some time as often as you can reviewing and updating your CV or your resume. Also, if you are looking for guidance and tips to help you land your dream tech job? You should read this I4G ebook, put together based on a conversation with Abraham lyiola, a graduate of Harvard and the founder of an HR-tech company.

As a gift, I have also created <u>this Resume Template for you</u>. You can easily edit this template with the knowledge you have gained from this book to create your resume. Click this link to download it.

I wish you the best in your career journey!

Best,

Adedolapo Lawal.

Program Associate, Ingressive for Good

If you enjoyed this book, take a screenshot of the next page, fill in the gap and share it online.

I just finished reading the "CV Writing eBook" by @ingressive4good and one thing I learned that stood out for me was

If you want to create an effective CV,

I challenge my friends

to read this book because it is a must-read.

Don't miss the next career resource.

Join the I4G Community now <u>via email</u>
and <u>on Telegram</u>. Also, follow us on
social media <u>@ingressive4good</u>

This book was put together by Ingressive for Good.

A nonprofit with a mission to help you increase your earning power by connecting you with tech skills, jobs, and opportunities. Read our impact in Africa so far. We always have scholarships, job roles, and opportunities. Don't miss them. Check our emails every other Tuesday.

You deserve to build a great career

Now go get it!