

Creating a Searchable CV & LinkedIn Profile

Before you Begin

When beginning your search for your next job, it all begins with the CV. The vast majority of people write a CV, then start looking for jobs to apply for, but this is actually the wrong way around, as that approach will lead to you creating a CV which is purely a record of what you've already done. This could be fine potentially, if you're looking to continue to do exactly what you've already been doing; otherwise, it's important to have a clear idea of what job you're seeking, so that you can create a CV to help get you there.

Before you begin, there are a few things to consider:

Who is going to read the CV?

The first person to read your CV, and make a decision on whether to consider you further or not, will normally be a recruitment consultant, in-house recruiter or HR person. This person will often be inexperienced, and will almost certainly not be technical, so will likely make their decision on the basis of word/skill-matching only. As a result, the CV needs to be clear, accessible and easily understandable.

A lot of people make the mistake of writing their CV for the person they want to read it (usually the hiring manager), not for the person is actually going to read it.

What will happen to it?

When applying to adverts, your CV is likely to go through parsing software of some kind - before it's actually read by anyone - to create a record for you on an ATS or CRM. The CV therefore needs to contain the information required for that record to be created.

How will people find it?

Whether your CV is on an ATS, CRM or online job board, people will search for your CV, usually by creating either a raw Boolean string or using a Boolean generator. Search strings will typically be a combination of job title, technical skill and functional experience.

Your CV therefore needs to contain a collection of relevant searchable terms, titles and phrases, to ensure that you come up within as many relevant searches as possible. Search results are usually generated and ranked by algorithms, which search for the term/phrase initially, then order the results by how often that term/phrase is repeated, together with where in the document it appears.



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Where to Begin

It's not really possible to create a CV that's relevant/applicable to more than one function, so you need to have a clear idea of what you want your next job to be. From there, it's a case of carrying out some simple research on a couple of the relevant job boards, such as CWjobs, Jobsite and Jobserve.

You're looking for adverts that match the path/function you've decided to pursue, and it's important to be realistic – you're not looking for adverts describing jobs you wish you could do, but adverts that you recognise yourself within.

From this research you're looking to ascertain three main things:

- Number of available, relevant roles – is your chosen function in high or low demand?
- An idea of market rate from the salaries advertised.
- The job titles currently being used most commonly to describe that function; this is key – make a note of the three or four most common.

Other things to look out for:

- Common skills/experiences being sought within those adverts, as these are likely to form the basis of the searches being run by the people trying to fill those roles.
- Gaps in your experience, such as a particular certification/qualification being sought. If the majority of jobs you're interested in request a qualification you don't currently have, it's a gap you could quite easily fill.
- Relevant agencies – if the same names keep cropping up, they might be good agencies to register with proactively.

One further resource that you may find useful during your research is www.itjobswatch.co.uk. Information is taken from all the major job boards, and it's possible to search on different skills, job titles and locations, to see the number of roles that match, and how those rank in terms of demand and the increase/decrease in that rank, as well as average salaries, etc.



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Creating a Searchable CV

Having carried out your research, and armed with the information/insight you've gained as a result, you're now in a position to create a CV, optimised for search, so that you appear in as many of the relevant searches as possible being run by recruitment professionals on a daily basis.

Contact details

You need to make it easy for people to contact you, so have a mobile number and email at the top of the first page.

Parsing software will look for a location for you, as nearly all searches will be location-based – candidates within xx miles of a company's location – so include town, county and postcode, as all three are potentially searchable.

Optional:

Nationality, date of birth, marital status, driving licence and visa status. None of these is essential, but visa status – making it clear whether or not you require sponsorship – will ensure that you receive contact only about jobs for which you are eligible.

If you're looking for a job in a location different from where you're currently living, it's advisable to put the town and county where you're moving to, using a local postcode too.

Otherwise, you'll only appear in searches for positions that are local to you now.

Include a link to your LinkedIn profile, as well as any professional portfolios/profiles, such as Stack Overflow and GitHub, to make it easy for people to find out more about you.

Personal profile/summary

This is the most important part of the CV, as, if written well, it will grab the attention of the reader and set the scene/context for the rest of the CV, as well as providing you with your first opportunity to deploy searchable content.

As most adverts/applications no longer require a covering letter, this section replaces that in many ways, and therefore needs to cover the same things as a traditional covering letter:

- Who I am: Describe yourself using either the job title of the role you're applying for, or the most common of the three or four job titles identified from your job board research.
- What I can do: Highlight briefly your main, relevant experience, again, reflecting either the skills/experience the advert you're applying to requires, or the common skills/experiences you've seen required from the adverts you looked at for your job board research.
- What I'm looking for: Use the remaining common job titles from your research as alternatives to the title you've led with, e.g "now seeking my next opportunity as a Web Developer, Software Developer or Software Engineer".

Another thing you might want to include is company size/environment. If you've worked in both corporate and SME environments, then say so, as this will highlight your relevance/ suitability, no matter which environment is required.

If you want to work only within one or the other, though, then make that clear here. Same thing with industry, whether you want a hands-on/hands-off position, to focus on a particular technology, etc.

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Skills/technical summary

List the skills/technologies you've worked with in order of relevance/strength, but be sure to list them all! The more skills/ technologies you can reference, the more searches you'll appear in.

Employment history

Your employment history should be written in reverse chronological order. Include a brief description of each company you've worked for, covering what they do/their industry and potentially, the size of the organisation. List your key responsibilities, ideally in bullet point form, being guided by the things you could see companies were interested in from the adverts you've looked at as part of your research. Include the technical environment/technologies used. In addition to your skills summary, this gives you some useful repetition and also shows where and when you've used the different technologies.

Qualifications and certifications

Generally best to list these in order – most recent first. If you're a recent graduate, this section should appear higher on your CV – probably after your personal profile/ summary – as it's one of the main criteria your application will be judged against.

Hobbies and interests

A good opportunity to provide a bit of insight into who you are as opposed to purely what you do, and this can help you to stand out. Also, this could just resonate with the person reading the CV, if there is some common ground.



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General CV Guidelines

Although it's true that your CV needs to be an accurate reflection your professional self, there are some basic guidelines you should consider to make sure that you're presenting yourself in a clear, professional and engaging way.

Font

Stick with a professional, clear font, such as Arial or Calibri, in a sensible point size, and avoid using too many colours, if any. Avoid tables and headers/footers – Parsing software can struggle to read the content.

Length

Two to four pages is generally fine, but this is dependent to some extent upon your level of experience. There's no real reason for a recent graduate to have a four page CV, but condensing 20 years of experience to just two pages can be difficult! If the content is relevant and furthering your cause, then keep it in. If it isn't, then remove it.

File format

Best to use .doc or .rtf as opposed to pdf.

Continuity

Explain any gaps on the CV, and ensure there's a complete record, from education through to the present day. Irrelevant and/or distant experience can always be abbreviated to just date, job title and company, if necessary.

References

Best to remove any referee information/contact details. You should never need to provide the details of referees until you have been offered a position, so there is no need to provide this information with your CV. Parsing software can also pick up your referees' contact details rather than your own, which can lead to inappropriate/potentially embarrassing contact happening!



Accuracy

Proof-read it carefully and get someone else to as well.

Consistency is key – Particularly with regards to style, formatting, font type and size.

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What to do with the CV you've created?

Upload your CV to the online searchable databases

There are a plethora of these databases out there, so you can always upload your CV to more, but we'd suggest starting with the main ones: CWjobs, Jobsite, Monster, Reed, Indeed and Dice.

Use all the available fields

The job boards want to make it easy for you to register with them, otherwise, you won't! To that end, there are very few mandatory fields. However, there are a multitude of fields made available to recruiters for searching purposes, and recruiters prefer to run as few searches as possible to find the candidates they want. If they're searching fields you haven't completed, you won't come up in those searches. Think about what people are likely to search on to find you – make sure it's that content you put in the relevant fields.

Required salary

Set your required salary at least £5k below what you would ideally want to accept. You might still want to hear about a role that is close to home with an excellent package, but where the basic salary is lower than what you're ideally seeking.

Be careful with locations

Listing a handful of towns may mean that you're not contacted about a role that comes up in a location you didn't think to include in your list, but that is actually the same distance away as those you did! Depending on the format of the field, a "mile radius" may be better, or listing counties rather than towns.

Tailor your CV to each application

This CV that you've created is a "control" CV, designed to ensure that you come up on as many relevant searches as possible.

When you have a specific role to apply for, and can see what skills and experience are required, it's important to ensure that your CV reflects that.

- Lead with the advertised job title – "I am an experienced VB.Net Developer with more than five years' experience of...", and remove the alternative job titles from the "now looking for my next opportunity as a..." section.
- Make sure you order your skills/technical summary in line with what they're asking for.
- Make sure that your descriptions of the roles you've held match the duties/responsibilities required by the role for which you're applying.

Refresh your profiles once a week

Most of the search results default to candidates registered in the last seven days, so if the person searching finds what they want within those results, they're not going to look any further back. Whatever timeframe is chosen, most people will order their search results by date anyway. Therefore, set a reminder for once a week to log into each of your profiles, amend something and "save", to reset your profile to "today". That way you'll always appear at the top of search results. Recruiters can also sign up to a service whereby CVs that match certain criteria they've set, are emailed to them as soon as they're registered. Regularly updating your profile will ensure that your CV ends up in the relevant recruiters' inboxes.

Tweak it

This should be a dynamic process, so experiment with the alternative job titles you've selected for inclusion in your personal profile. If you continually receive contact about a particular role/job title that isn't relevant to you, simply remove that particular job title and replace it with a new alternative.

Keep experimenting, until you're getting the contact that you want.

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Creating a searchable LinkedIn profile

Whilst search options vary according to the type of account held, it is generally possible to search on “Keywords” – which searches pretty much the whole profile – and then various fields including “Name”, “Company” and “Title”.

It is therefore important to ensure that your profile contains the necessary searchable content to come up in relevant searches.

Change your “notify your network” settings

Before making any changes to your profile, change the setting that notifies your network when you make a change to your profile, as this can at best irritate your connections and at worst, draw attention to the fact that you’re looking for a new role.

Professional headline

Most people’s professional headline is their current job title and company, but you can change it to say whatever you want.

Unless you have a paid account, the only information shown when you appear in a search is your photo, name and this professional headline, so it’s best to use the most common of the three or four job titles identified from your job board research, e.g. “Talented and innovative VB.Net Developer”.

If you’re able to advertise the fact that you’re looking for work, do so here as well:

e.g. “Talented and innovative VB.Net Developer – immediately available” or “Talented and innovative VB.Net Developer – currently seeking a new opportunity”, etc.

Summary

This should be pretty much copied and pasted from your CV. If, though, you’re currently employed and your employer isn’t aware that you’re looking, you’ll need to remove the “now looking for my next opportunity as a...” section.

Experience

Again, this should be more or less copied from your CV, but with particular attention paid to your job titles, as it’s possible to search on both current and past titles.

With that in mind, if your actual job title is either unique to your employer or not representative of the role you do or the role you want to be found for, then you have two options:

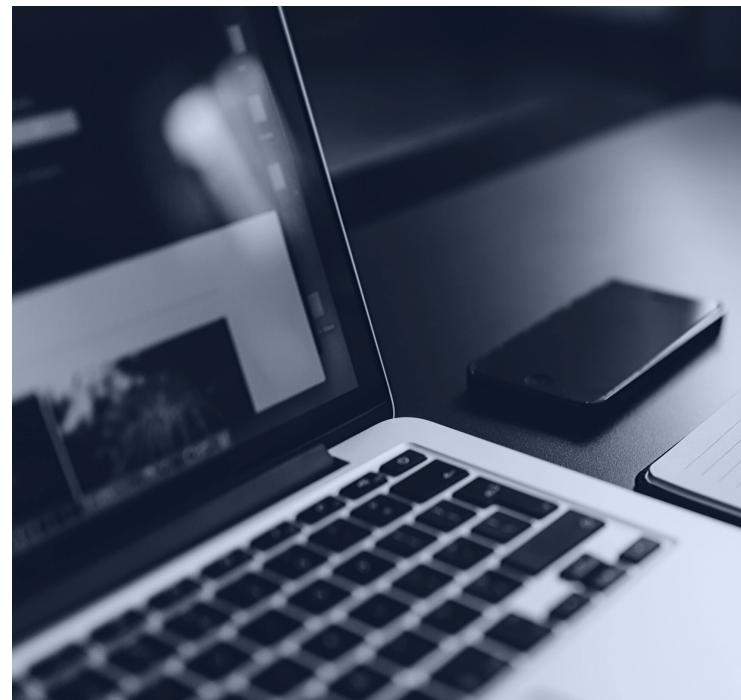
- You can either pick a more standard or representative title, but this may raise some eyebrows/lead to some questions from your current boss.
- Or you can use “/” or brackets, e.g. “Support Manager / Infrastructure Manager” or “ICT Customer Engineer (Support Analyst)”

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Get a photo

LinkedIn research suggests that profiles with a picture are 14 times more likely to be viewed than those without. Pick a photo that is recent, just of you, has you smiling/looking friendly and approachable, and ideally has you in smart or smart-casual clothing – a “professional” photo rather than a personal/Facebook photo.



Contact details

One of the challenges from a recruiter perspective of using LinkedIn to find candidates, is how to contact someone you find, as well as not knowing how receptive they'll be to that contact.

You can send an invitation to connect or an InMail, but these are often ignored and/or go to spam folders. InMails also cost money. If you make it easy for the recruiter to contact you outside of LinkedIn, they're far more likely to do so, so the best thing to do is to simply include your email address and mobile number at the end of your summary. This is unlikely to raise the suspicion of a current employer, but will serve as a bit of a “flag” to a recruiter that you are open to being contacted. If you're not comfortable with giving out your number, then an email address will suffice.

Some candidates create a separate email address purely for when they're job-hunting. If you've done so, you can use that address here.

Contact us for more information.

We're more than happy to talk you through creating your CV and LinkedIn profile, and to offer guidance where we can.

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