

Redeployment Services

CV writing

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Purpose

CV stands for curriculum vitae which is Latin for 'Course of Life,' and is a document which covers a job-seekers professional and educational history, professional accomplishments, awards & recognitions.

Every jobseeker, no matter how experienced, needs to make a great first impression with their CV. Sending your CV to a hiring manager is the first chance you have to sell your skills and make a positive impression and convince the hiring manager to offer you an interview, so it should be a professional and well-presented document.

CV's are assessed by the hiring managers against the requirements listed on the job advertisement. If you don't meet the requirements for the job then the CV will be rejected. If you do meet the requirements of the job your CV will be taken through to the next stage of the recruitment process, this could be a second sift, an assessment event or an interview.

Writing a strong CV can be one of the biggest challenges involved in securing an interview. It's important you invest enough time in yourself to create a document that makes you stand out from your competitors. Often we are too modest at marketing ourselves, or have self-doubt in our own achievements to successfully portray our own skills, abilities and achievements well.

This guide has been created to assist you in creating a CV that will maximise your chances of securing an interview.

Format

A CV is a marketing tool that describes your unique selling points. There are many different styles to present your CV and there are no right or wrong templates, it is entirely a matter of choice and personal opinion however, a 'reverse chronological order CV' is probably the most appropriate style to use when applying for jobs within Network Rail. See Appendix C for some examples CV layout.

Hiring managers may only have a short amount of time to read your CV so it's important to make it as easy as possible to read.

Follow the basic rules below for a professional, well laid out CV:-

- Use plain white paper, and make your CV easy to read on a computer screen.
- Use a standard font throughout and avoid things like multi-coloured text, various font sizes, italics, graphics, or flowery borders!
- Avoid using photos or a title page.
- Keep it simple – it should be easy to read and use active language.

- Two pages of A4 is enough, (the first half page is the most critical).
- Use chronological order to explain your career history, starting with the most recent.
- Focus on your most recent career history; hiring managers are less interested in the detail of your career dating back several years. Very briefly summarise your historic career details.
- Use bullet points; it helps the reader to scan through, breaks up your CV and clarifies your experience in short sentences.
- Don't waffle, use clear concise sentences.
- Make sure you include a personal statement.
- Check thoroughly for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Don't list your job responsibilities – write about your achievements!

Writing your CV

Your CV should always be tailored for each job application rather than using the same generic CV. Ensure that the essential requirements of the job advert are included in your CV so that you don't fail the first sift.

- Don't leave gaps in your career history, this makes recruiters suspicious! Any gaps in timeline should be explained for example, career break or travelling.
- Keep it current – ideally you should keep your CV up to date whether you're looking for a job or not. Every time something significant occurs in your career, record it so you don't later forget something that could be important.
- Tell the truth and don't exaggerate! Lying about something on your CV may result in you being eliminated from the recruiting process.
- Don't be afraid to market yourself, seize the opportunity to show-case your abilities.

Personal details

Include your name, phone number, email address and any professional social media presence such as LinkedIn. Make sure your email address is professional.

Don't list your personal details such as home address, marital status, nationality or date of birth – hiring managers can make a decision about your skills and abilities without this information.

Personal statement

A personal statement is a short summary of your key skills and experiences that should be placed at the top of your CV. It is sometimes referred to as a 'personal profile' but the purpose is exactly the same. It's a quick way for hiring managers to quickly identify what value you can add to the team so this statement must be a persuasive and reflect your core strengths and include a concise summary of your skills and experience.

- Keep it short - it should only be a few lines long, ideally no more than 5 lines.
- The first few words are the most important. They should state your profession as a very short description e.g., 'experienced railway engineer' or 'qualified management accountant' or 'CIPD qualified HR manager'.
- Analyse your strengths; the statement should include a concise summary of your major selling points, especially those that are important to the job that you are applying to. Ask yourself... Why are you suited to the role? What previous jobs have you had that relate to the job? What specialist skills do you have that make you an ideal candidate?
- Use action words to brighten up the content, add some adjectives to describe who you are as a person so that the hiring manager can understand your strengths. (Refer to Appendix A for some adjective ideas to help you identify your strong points)
- Avoid using the words 'I' or 'we' and avoid clichés such as 'hard working' or 'team player.'
- Be truthful, don't exaggerate.
- Read your statement out loud to ensure it flows naturally.
- Get a second opinion; show it to trusted colleagues or friends.

Below are some examples of personal statements:-

- ✓ *Results orientated Manager within the hotel sector. Proven track record of providing exemplary levels of service to a broad range of guests, including VIPs and high profile individuals.*
- ✓ *Resourceful Project Leader with an optimistic outlook. Excellent ability to motivate others and communicate clearly and comfortably to all levels of the organisation, creating excellent working environments and high performing teams.*
- ✓ *Customer focussed Facility Manager with excellent communication and problem solving skills. Experienced leader with a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of Project Management. Consistent track record partnering with staff and key stakeholders to successfully improve efficiency, reduce operating costs and increase productivity.*

Compare the above statements with the following poor example:

- ✗ *I am a hard working individual who enjoys working. I am excellent at meeting deadlines and am a good team player. I have five years' experience of business and I would contribute to your job with my excellent skills and past work experience.*

Employment history – focus on your achievements

Achievements are the results that you personally make when in a job. It's not the same as the duties that are listed on your job description, everyone has these routine responsibilities but it doesn't necessarily mean that they are performed well, so highlight your achievements not your duties!

Achievements identify something extra that benefited the company and demonstrate the contribution that you made towards reaching the company's goals. Your achievements will help the new hiring manager to understand your expertise as you can demonstrate a proven track record of success. Your achievements will tell the hiring manager why you're the right person for the job!

- Achievements for each job should be listed in bullet points, and each achievement should start with an action verb, e.g., reduced spend, increased profitability, maximised sales. (Refer to Appendix B for a list of power verbs to assist you).
- Try and quantify your achievements by outlining the quantity or volume; using numbers and figures present a clearer picture for the hiring manager.
- Limit the description to an achievement to one sentence, and three to six achievements per job is enough.
- Each achievement should describe a skill, an activity and a result/benefit.

How to identify your achievements

Achievements will usually provide you with a sense of pride, or a memory of professional success. You should think about what lasting impact or legacy you made in your job, or when you have saved the company money, increased performance or productivity; or made it a safer place to work.

Hiring managers are almost always looking for self-starters who can use their own initiative as they are most likely to be high achievers who go above and beyond what is being asked; make sure you include an achievement that highlights something you initiated voluntarily.

Include any formal recognition or company awards that you received as this will demonstrate your excellent reputation, skill and knowledge. And think of any other accomplishments that you made that weren't formally recognised.

Consider what achievements you have made when working on challenging projects or collaborating successfully with multi-functional teams, as managers generally assign their strongest staff to critical projects.

To help you identify your achievements write down your answers to the following questions:-

Ask yourself... When have I?

- Reorganised something to make it work better?
- Identified a problem and solved it?
- Came up with a new idea that improved things or made things safer?
- Developed or implemented new procedures or systems?
- Worked on special projects?
- Been complimented by your manager or colleagues?
- Increased performance or productivity?
- Made it a safer place to work?
- Contributed to good customer service?

Next review your answers to the questions above and highlight the following 3 key areas:-

1. What was the problem or challenge? What were the circumstances or conditions? Was there a tight deadline? Was this done without supervision?
2. What action did you take? What skills or abilities did you use? Refer to the strong action verbs listed in appendix B for inspiration!
3. What was the result? Examples could be increased performance, customer satisfaction or increased efficiency

The achievements are not easy to write, especially if you're not a writer by nature. Just keep looking for ways to make each statement as concise and powerful as possible, and keep practising!

Below are some examples of achievement statements:

- ✓ Developed a new employee induction programme that 100% of the company locations adopted.
- ✓ Designed a new test rig that increased productivity by 20%.
- ✓ Created a social media campaign that increased graduate attraction by 20%.
- ✓ Increased performance by 10% through effectively training 15 new employees in 1 year.

Qualifications and vocational training

The summary of your educational background and training is an important part of the CV. Start with the highest qualification first and list the rest in descending order. You should consider including any qualifications or competencies that you've completed whilst at Network Rail, as well as any external training or professional memberships.

If your educational qualification is your strongest selling point you should probably want to mention your qualification in your personal statement. However, if your work experience is

stronger than your education it is advisable to list the qualifications and training after the employment history section in your CV.

Educational and training can include academic results, degrees, diplomas and certificates, technical and professional qualifications and work and vocational training received.

- Don't take up too much space in your CV; keep the section short, concise and uncluttered.
- Don't assume the reader will understand the acronyms of your training and qualifications, consider expanding the terms by using the full title.
- Make sure you list all the essential qualifications and training highlighted in the job advertisement.
- Don't list endless training courses that bare no relevance to your job application.

Additional information and interests

You should mention in this section if you have a full clean driving licence, and also explain any gaps in your employment history like travelling or family reasons.

A list of hobbies and interests are not mandatory on a CV, although recently employers are keen to recruit people who are a cultural fit to their team so hobbies and interests are slowly becoming more commonplace on a CV.

Be aware of the conclusions that might be drawn from your hobbies and only list unique hobbies or interests which are relevant to the job and show-case aspects of your personality that you wish to emphasise and communicate.

- Try to highlight areas of interest which will demonstrate transferrable skills.
- Volunteering and mentoring activities are noble activities to list on your CV.
- If you are involved in any clubs or societies, this can show that you enjoy meeting new people.
- Interests like sports and physical recreation activities can also show recruiters that you are fit and enjoy teamwork situations.
- Games like chess suggest you are an intelligent strategist.
- Avoid listing extreme sports as they suggest you are risk taker and are more likely to be injured!
- Be truthful, any lies could be found out as your hobbies may be used to initiate small talk during an interview!

Review your CV

Once you are happy with the content of your CV, you should check it several times, regardless of the level of position you're applying for, or the experience you have.

Use empathy when reviewing your CV. Imagine that you are the hiring manager reading your CV. Would you be happy with it? Is it legible and does it cover you everything you need to know? Make sure you are pleased with your CV before using it as you won't get a second chance to apply for the same job.

- Look for spelling and grammar mistakes – use the spell check function on your computer and don't use Americanised words such as utilize instead of utilise.
- Check the format and font – make sure it's consistent.
- Adapt your CV to the job description as much as possible, but you shouldn't exaggerate your experience, knowledge or qualifications. Interviewers will often ask for proof of qualifications or will ask interview questions in a way as to discover your exact experience.
- Read it twice, ask a friend to check it too.

Appendix A: Creating a personal statement – adjective ideas

Creating a personal statement – adjective ideas

ambitious	energetic	proactive
amicable	enterprising	productive
attentive	enthusiastic	professional
capable	excellent	punctual
confident	friendly	qualified
conscientious	industrious	reliable
consistent	innovative	results-driven
creative	knowledgeable	self-starter
credible	loyal	skilful
decisive	meticulous	sociable
determined	motivated	talented
diligent	organised	thorough
disciplined	passionate	trustworthy
dynamic	patient	vivacious
efficient	persistent	

Appendix B: Creating an achievement focussed CV – power verbs

Creating an achievement focussed CV – power verbs	
You led a project	Chaired, controlled, coordinated, executed, headed, operated, orchestrated, organised, oversaw, planned, produced, programmed
You brought in partners funding or resources	Acquired, forged, navigated, negotiated, partnered, secured
You saved the company time or money	Conserved, consolidated, decreased, deducted, diagnosed, lessened, reconciled, reduced, yielded
You supported customers	Advised, advocated, arbitrated, coached, consulted, educated, fielded, informed, resolved
You oversaw or regulated	Authorised, blocked, delegated, despatched, enforced, ensured, inspected, itemised, monitored, screened, scrutinised, verified
You achieved something	Attained, awarded, completed, demonstrated, earned, exceeded, outperformed, reached, showcased, succeeded, surpassed, targeted
You increased efficiency, sales, revenue, or customer satisfaction	Accelerated, achieved, advanced, amplified, boosted, capitalised, delivered, enhanced, expanded, expedited, furthered, gained, generated, improved, lifted, maximised, outpaced, stimulated, sustained
You changed or improved something	Centralised, clarified, converted, customised, influenced, integrated, merged, modified, overhauled, redesigned, refined, refocused, rehabilitated, remodelled, reorganised, replaced, restructured, revamped, revitalised, simplified, streamlined
You managed a team	Aligned, cultivated, directed, enabled, facilitated, fostered, guided, hired, inspired, mentored, mobilised, motivated, recruited, regulated, shaped, supervised, taught, trained, unified, united
You brought life to a project	Administered, built, chartered, created, designed, developed, devised, founded, engineered, established, formalised, formed, formulated, implemented, incorporated, initiated, instituted, introduced, launched
You wrote or communicated	Authored, briefed, campaigned, composed, conveyed, convinced, corresponded, counselled, critiqued, defined, documented, edited, illustrated, lobbied, persuaded, promoted, publicised, reviewed
You researched	Analysed, assembled, assessed, audited, calculated, discovered, evaluated, examined, explored, forecasted, identified, interpreted, investigated, mapped, measured, qualified, quantified, surveyed, tested, tracked

Appendix C: Examples of CV layout: reverse chronological order

Option 1

Name	
Tel No Email address	

Personal statement	
Career history	
Job title, location, function	most recent Date YY/YY
Quick context of job in 1 sentence	
Key achievements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start each sentence with a power verb • Describe a skill, an activity and a result/benefit • • • • 	
Job title, location, function	Date YY/YY
Quick context of job in 1 sentence	
Key achievements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start each sentence with a power verb • Describe a skill, an activity and a result/benefit • • • • 	

Page1

Page2

Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
Quick context job duties in 1 sentence	
Key achievements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start each sentence with a power verb • Describe a skill, an activity and a result/benefit • 	
Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
Condense a summary of key achievements in a couple of lines	
Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
Condense a summary of key achievements in a couple of lines	
Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
Condense a summary of key achievements in a couple of lines	
Qualifications	
Vocational Training	
Additional information	

Option 2

Name	
Tel No	Email address
 Personal statement	
 Major achievements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤ 	
Career history	
Job title, location, function	most recent Date YY/YY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key achievements • Start each sentence with a power verb • Describe a skill, an activity and a result/benefit • • • • 	

Page1

Page2

Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key achievements • Start each sentence with a power verb • Describe a skill, an activity and a result/benefit • • • 	
Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start each sentence with a power verb • Describe a skill, an activity and a result/benefit • • • • 	
Additional employment experience & early career	
 Education, qualifications, courses & training	
 Hobbies & interests	

Option 3

Name	
Tel No	Email address
Personal statement	
Skills summary	
➤	
➤	
➤	
➤	
Career highlights	
➤	
➤	
➤	
➤	
Employment history	
Job title, location, function	most recent Date YY/YY
Key achievements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key achievements • Start each sentence with a power verb • Describe a skill, an activity and a result/benefit • • 	

Page1

Page2

Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
Key achievements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key achievements • Start each sentence with a power verb • Describe a skill, an activity and a result/benefit • 	
Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
Condense a summary of key achievements in a couple of lines	
Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
Condense a summary of key achievements in a couple of lines	
Job title, location,	Date YY/YY
Condense a summary of key achievements in a couple of lines	
Education	

