

Five Tips for Creating a Great CV

- Why is it important to have an up-to-date CV?
- Personal details - what should I include in my CV?
- Employment history - how much detail is really required?
- Role titles - is it okay to change my role title?
- Areas of expertise/demonstrated competencies
- Referee details

Why is it important to have an up-to-date CV?

Your CV should always be at the ready. Even when you are not job-seeking, it is important to have an up-to-date CV that accurately reflects your skills and experience. You never know when an opportunity may present itself to you. Some possible instances are:

- A vacancy appears internally
- You are interested in being seconded to another position
- You are head-hunted by a recruitment agency or competitor – either nationally and globally
- You are asked to include your CV in a tender/proposal document
- You decide it is time to move on
- You are being interviewed by the media
- You decide to take on some voluntary work or apply to be a board member.

1. Personal details – what should I include in my CV?

You are NOT obliged to include:

- Your age
- Date of birth
- Ethnicity
- Marital status
- Whether or not you have children, or their ages
- Place of birth – although this is useful if you were not educated in New Zealand.

You should include:

- Your full name
- Current physical address
- Current postal address if different from physical
- Phone numbers you can be contacted on during business hours
- Email address – if you provide a work address, recruiters are discreet but the words CV, referee, new role, etc will be in the body of the email
- The most suitable time of day to be contacted and the preferred medium (for example, between 1-4pm on my mobile)
- If you are not a New Zealand resident/citizen, indicate when your work permit expires
- If English is your second language, specify your first language and any other languages you speak
- Voluntary work you perform – the organisation, role title (for example, telephone counsellor, Project K mentor, board member, etc) and dates you worked for them
- A brief list of interests.



It is recommended that you place your name, physical address, phone numbers and email address as a header and include page numbers in the footer on your CV. This means if the pages of your CV are separated after being printed, they can be re-assembled.

2. Employment history - how much detail is really required?

The last five to seven years of your work history are the most relevant. It is essential that the information you provide in your CV is specific, succinct and accurate. You need to sell yourself, but the detail does need to reflect what you actually did, not what you would have liked to have done.

Break the detail into two sections for each role: 'responsibilities' and 'achievements'. The responsibilities are the actions, tasks or activities you performed in the role. Referring to your position description is often an easy way to complete this; however, it is not advisable to simply copy and paste the contents.

Your achievements demonstrate your attitude and aptitude. You may see some of your achievements as being too minor to mention, but a prospective employer could see the value they added to your organisation and/or to your learning and development; for example, member of the organisation-wide change project team, president of the social club, team trainer, review and implementation of new systems, reduction of monthly spend by \$250k, etc.

For roles that you held more than seven years ago, simply list the organisation, dates, title and a brief description of what you did (if it is not self-explanatory) rather than a list of tasks from your position description. The most efficient and effective way to display this is in a summary table on the front page of your CV.

You should include details of all your employment even if you do not feel it is relevant to the particular role you are applying for. Recruitment agencies and employers do like to know about your employment background because it gives them a feel for who you are. You never know when that one year's experience in hospitality, banking, mining, or working in Antarctica will make you more attractive to a prospective employer.

It is a good idea to have two CV templates – a long- and a short-format CV. The long format will include all your referee details, list of responsibilities for every job you have held, all voluntary work, education/training, awards/certificates and, most importantly, dates you held the positions. The short CV template is approximately four to six pages long.

3. Role titles – is it okay to change my role title?

Please do not change the title to make it sound more sexy, descriptive or important. Many people do this believing they will not be caught out. When a reference check is performed, your employer will be asked to confirm your role title. They will also be asked to confirm your responsibilities, which are cross-checked against your CV and what you say at the interview.

4. Areas of expertise/demonstrated competencies

Your areas of expertise can be summarised on the front page of your CV above your career summary table. This allows the reader to see at a glance what expertise you are bringing to the role and the organisation. For example, communication, analytical ability, decision-making, leadership, sales, teamwork, etc.

You can also include a more detailed 'demonstrated competencies' section which you tailor to each role applied for. Include the competency headings from the position description and any others you feel are relevant and appropriate. Under each heading, include examples of how you have demonstrated that particular competency. You can include achievements from historical roles and quotes from your performance appraisals.

5. Referee details

You are not obliged to include the details of your referees on your CV unless the vacancy advertisement requests them.

However, it is important to keep these recorded and up-to-date. If you are successful in obtaining an interview for a position, you will be asked to provide two, possibly three, referees. Depending on the type of role you are applying for, the referees could be people to whom you reported directly, a key client or stakeholder or a direct report. In a sales/account management/relationship management role, you are able to provide one client as a referee. This client needs to be someone you worked with closely and for a considerable length of time.

If you can, you should list your most recent employers. In most cases, employers from five or more years ago will not be able to comment on who you are now and the experience you have gained since leaving them. If you do not feel comfortable using your current manager as a referee, think about another manager with whom you have worked closely and trust. Do disclose your reasons for not contacting your current manager to the potential employer.

It is important to maintain contact with your referees. When they move on, find out how you can make contact with them. Do not expect the recruiter or HR advisor to track them down for you.

It is in your best interest to advise your referees when you are looking for a new role or have given out their details so that they can be contacted. There is nothing worse than the recruiter or HR advisor calling you to say the referee had no idea you had given out their details and was not prepared to discuss your working relationship! Believe it – this does happen.

Don't be afraid to list your overseas employers; however, ensure they are aware and willing. It is up to you to establish the best time of day for a potential employer to call them or, alternatively, provide an email address.

If you are still unsure if your CV flows or you are starting a new one from scratch, email tracy@carrollconsulting.co.nz for our free CV template.