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THE KISS OF LIFE FOR THE TECHNICAL CV

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Reviewing, revising and at times re-writing CV's in full, has happened on more occasions than I wish to admit, but it's worth it when you finally have a 'pièce de résistance' that you know represents your candidate at their best as well as providing the correct and relevant information to the client. The end, certainly justifies the means when you make the placement…. But wow can it be arduous!

Honestly… some of the CV's that have crossed my desk over the years, can at times only be classed as comical! I have seen applications from helpdesk engineers with six months experience including the summer bar work abroad span 3 plus pages and Senior Technical Consultants not outlining any of the systems that they work with nor the technical environments they have worked in….. This is the never ending Jerry Maguire moment where I'm screaming internally at my computer screen…… 'Help me help you'!

Luckily for some…. and maybe not so much for others; I believe in constructive criticism. Not addressing the issue isn't doing anyone any favours. Considering the economic climate, it has been a tough few years for a lot of people and providing advice in this context can really help (and if I am to receive that same CV another 20 times applying for every job I have posted…. Recruiters you know what I'm talking about…. I'll go mad). So; where possible, I try to advise on the recruitment process and CV writing.

Presentation, content, structure and format have an impact on appropriate applications and getting the CV right is just the first of many steps in the recruitment process, but what an important first step it is!

I recommend the KISS principle! "The KISS principle states that most systems work best if they are kept simple rather than made complex; therefore simplicity should be a key goal in design and unnecessary complexity should be avoided!" Thank you Wikipedia for putting this so eloquently! A small variation to the phrase is more appropriate and works best for our purpose "keep it simple and straightforward".

Based on this principle I have outlined some pointers for putting together a Technical CV. I appreciate many recruiters have preferred formats, this is mine, but as long as the information is relevant and evident I'm sure anything along these lines will suffice:

The KISS Tips:

APPLICATION CHOICE:

Job Descriptions

These can sometimes be a wish list, but if you are not ticking 75% of what's required, chances are, there are more suitable candidates on the market – do not just apply for the sake of it.

Note: Suitability varies on position – at helpdesk level you would want to be matching at least 90% of the requirements whereas in specialist areas there is greater flexibility especially if skills are rare on the market.

If you are interested in the company

Don't send your CV in via an inappropriate role, the likelihood is that it will just be deleted. Instead, contact the company/HR

/Recruitment Department and see if there is a contact you can send your CV directly to or connect with that person on LinkedIn and follow the company

FORMAT:

Word Document

Word documents are easier to transfer into templates and edit where appropriate

TIP: A lot of recruitment or company databases will not be able to do a key word search on .pdf or other formats, consequently, although on their system, your CV may never be found!

Font

Calibri, Arial or Times (10, 11 or 12 font)

Spacing

Remove needless spacing, keep to single line spacing

NOTE: this will assist with keeping your CV to the desired 2-3 pages.

Tables

Where at all possible, do not write your CV in a table format. Having to edit and reformat is very time consuming and frustrating.

Length

Keep your CV up to 2-3 pages

NOTE: (I have had CV's come through at 8-10 pages in length….nobody is interested in having to filter and trawl through that much information to find the skills that are relevant to their requirement. Keeping the content specific to the requirement will assist in this process. I have had Senior Managers and Technical Architects with 30 years' experience get their CV's to 2.5 pages, if they can do it, so can you!).

Do not reduce your font to 8 to facilitate keeping the pages down, if the content is relevant, we still need to be able to read it.

Picture

No thank you, not necessary and it just takes up space; provide your LinkedIn profile link and if you wish, have your picture there.

CONTENT:

Tailor your CV for each application

Review the requirements and skills necessary for the position in the job specification

In your job descriptions make sure you make your experience evident with each requirement – if you know you can do the job – make sure we know too!

TIP: Keep in mind the majority of HR or Recruitment personnel may not come from a technical background – spell it out and make the appropriate skills obvious – this will greatly increase the chances of you getting a call to elaborate and explain your CV further

Do not lie

You will get caught, it's not worth it and it is a waste of everyone's time so just DON'T DO IT. Keep your experience real there is not point 'fluffing' a CV to get the job you want but are not suitable for. Your reputation with your recruiter will be in disrepute as well as with the company.

Spell Check

It's a simple click of a button, do it! Grammar and spelling mistakes are a big NO NO on CV's. There is no reason or excuse what-so-ever. Spell check the document in full and ensure your comma and spacing is correct.

STRUCTURE

Outline:

Personal Details – name, address, contact number, LinkedIn profile link

Summary (discretionary)

Certifications/Training & Education – chronological order

Technical Skills Matrix – core strengths

Professional Experience/ Career History

Previous Career History if beyond 2000 or if experience is not relevant

Hobbies (discretionary)

Reference (make note to availability)

Technical Skills Matrix

Provide a technical skills matrix (two columns with bullet points) outlining your core technical strengths and systems/software you are very competent working with

TIP: Do not list every single technology you have ever worked with, especially if it is over 5+ years ago

Technical Certifications/Education

Order these in chronological order

NOTE: Keep in mind expiry dates i.e.: Cisco Certs etc. If they are no longer valid and you are no longer working in that area, leave them out. If relevant but expired, outline the dates.
TIP: Have your certifications scanned and saved for easy access should they ever be requested!

Previous Career history

Previous career history is to showcase career continuity but because it is some time ago the skills are dated or no longer relevant. For these positions you can just note the Company Name, Job Title and Dates of employment/assignment.

If you were in permanent positions and were with a company for quite some time, you can provide a sentence or two to overview your time and role there but keep it short as these positions usually have no bearing on the current application from a skillset perspective. If you are highlighting Industry experience, then the company name etc. should suffice and you could note the industry in the Summary instead.

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CV)

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