

Brushing up your CV

What university freshers need to know

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It has become common among university freshers to look for job opportunities early to garner headstarts to strengthen their profile. With the job market getting more competitive than ever, aspiring job-seeking freshers need to present a CV that makes them stand out from the majority.

Reconstructing your CV from scratch is a lengthy process, so it's better to tweak it and bring a few changes according to what employers like to see on a well-structured CV.

In the first part of this 3-article series, we will get you through a list of do's and don'ts on a CV for university freshers to help them stand out and land their desired jobs.

What employers want to see

Although there is no magic formula to craft a perfect CV, certain things can appeal to recruiters. These tips will not guarantee a call for an interview, but they will surely enhance the possibility of you getting a call for one.

Extracurricular activities

Highlight any noteworthy activity that is not limited to your academics. According to Md. Abdul Quayyum, Head of Communications at a leading multinational development agency, "Going beyond the classroom makes a candidate's CV exceptional". As a fresher, highlighting your extra-curricular activities will give you a head start over your competitors. "Your activities can be a range of things, including competitive debating, organising events, administrative work in your school/college clubs, voluntary work, community work, and more," Mr Quayyum adds.

Proper formatting

A well-formatted CV is an instant attention grabber. Make sure your CV has consistency throughout its format. This includes consistency in fonts, designs, texts, the colour palette, and even templates. For example, try not to use different fonts in different sections. Instead, stick to one font for the entire CV.

Mention your skills, experience, and other relevant information in bullet points. Use PDF formats and name your file properly. That way, your resume will look more organised and catch the attention of your potential employer.

Conciseness

Job recruitments are quite a drawn-out process. Most applications do not even

get a proper screening. The reason behind this is a lack of conciseness. Allocated time for initial CV screening at a highly selective place could range from as little as 30 seconds to 180 seconds.

Recruiters usually allocate a maximum of two minutes to screen a CV. Any CV that takes longer to screen is usually not taken into consideration. Therefore, it is imperative to be precise. Employers do not expect a university fresher to have a three to four-page CV. In short, describe yourself, your relevant skillset, and your experiences concisely but articulately.

Skills and experience

The more you focus on relevant skills, the more likely your CV will catch an employer's attention. Some of the core

companies do not solely rely on CVs and conduct background research on their potential candidates. The best way to showcase your digital presence is by having an active LinkedIn profile.

Regularly update your profile, and it's sure to catch the eyes of your potential employers. "Digital CVs are equally important nowadays. Having a good LinkedIn profile and a decent footprint on social media is essential along with the traditional CV," says Mr Quayyum.

Transparency

Lack of transparency in a resume often leads to instant rejection. If an applicant cannot paint a distinct picture of themselves, chances are their CVs don't even pass the primary screening process.



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

skills that employers look for in freshers are basic knowledge of Microsoft Office, leadership qualities, management, and communication skills. Working knowledge of Adobe Photoshop Lightroom will help your CV stand out from the rest.

But it is essential to mention your experiences that back up your skills. Employers do not expect freshers to have a handful of expertise at entry-level positions. So don't worry about not having enough experience. Make sure to mention the ones that you do have in a way that they align with your skillset.

Digital presence

Your digital presence matters a lot when it comes to job recruitments. Many

Your CV essentially shows why you are the best fit for your desired position. Hence, you need to articulate who you are and what sets you apart from the rest.

What employers do not want to see

While there are no strict guidelines on what a CV should include, popular opinions of recruiters reflect on certain practices that are not preferred. Some of these practises may lead to a quick elimination, whereas other techniques put the CV at a disadvantage.

False information

"Honesty and transparency should be your priority," says Ishtiaque Shahriar, Head of Products and Marketing at a leading financial institution. "Being yourself is the best thing despite how

niche it sounds," he adds. Freshers sometimes lie on their CV, not considering that employers usually have many years of experience, and they can identify if you are lying on your CV. It is important to note that exaggerations are also considered to be false information.

Most renowned organisations run a background check on the candidate as well. If an applicant is caught lying, their CV is automatically rejected. Some companies also keep their identity recorded in their database for future reference. Companies take integrity seriously, and honesty is always the best route in your CV.

Generic 'About Me' section

This leads to a definitive disadvantage. This makes your CV look like just another one in the crowd. Furthermore, this is often considered ingenuine as it does not reflect who you are. The 'About Me' section should reflect on your aspirations, values, and how you wish to fit in the industry. Employers often get a mental picture of the applicant from this section, so low-effort content is strongly discouraged. "We expect young applicants to showcase their enthusiasm and creativity through their CV," says Mr Shaanto.

Grammatical errors

Any grammatical error at any section of a CV is considered a red flag. It puts the applicant's calibre in question and casts a doubt on their overall competency. So even if you are sending a CV somewhere at the eleventh hour, remember to proofread it thoroughly. As freshers submit many applications, it is essential to proofread the CV to personalise it for each application.

Personal details

If a CV includes irrelevant personal information such as height, weight, marital status, etc, they are automatically rejected in many places. This is because equal opportunity employers wish to make the selection process based on the individual. Furthermore, this is also a waste of space on the CV, and it shows that the applicant is not prioritising their skills, education or experience.

By following the guidelines listed above, freshers can improve the quality of their CVs and eventually pave their way forward into their relevant industries.

