

## **16 Tips on writing a CV that will help get you a job in New Zealand**

One of the things that a lot of Migrants come unstuck with is the difference in CV style between New Zealand and their home country. If you are trying to get a job in New Zealand, especially if you are doing it from home before you get here – it pays to make damn sure you write a CV that New Zealand employers will read and take notice of.

So here are some tips from Avalon's Hubby – who spends a fair amount of time now having to read CV's and decide who gets interviewed, and also helping prospective migrants tidy their CV's ready for the New Zealand job market.

### **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN UK and NZ CV's**

#### **1/ List of jobs vs. a full description of who you are:**

A UK style CV is often a list of your education, work experience and hobbies, and generally isn't expected to be more than a page or two long.

In New Zealand – you need to be thinking of adding a lot more detail – but this is not a licence to waffle.

#### **2/ Your personal and professional summary becomes more important:**

In the UK, this would normally be shoved in at the end of your CV, whereas in New Zealand – who you are becomes more important in a lot of cases than who you worked for. So the summary comes first.

Most NZ employers, by virtue of being small companies, are actually interviewing you to figure out if you're going to fit in their organisation as part of the team. There is either an assumption that your technical skills are whatever you claim them to be, or that your skills are less important than how you will fit in with everyone else. NZ Employers want to feel that they know you often before offering a job. In a small country with sometimes only three degree's of separation to everyone else, it's like you're being interviewed to join the family.

#### **3/ Europe wide postings are not so important:**

In the UK if you have spent time working overseas in Europe – then that's something to emphasise on your CV. Here in New Zealand – while it is still important to mention it – it doesn't carry the same weight – so you don't need to emphasise it as much.

#### **4/ You don't need to describe the company you worked for:**

Kiwi employers don't seem to care that your last employer was a Multinational Widget Service agent. They want to know about what you did with the widgets. Sell yourself not your last employer

#### **5/ Put on your CV what kind of role you are looking for:**

We have found that many Job Ads in NZ are basically “fishing trips”. There is no specific job available – the company just wants to know who is out there and looking. It can save a lot of wasted time on your part if you pre-empt this by using your CV to state what roles you are looking at. It stops you being told that you're really great – they just don't have a job for you!

If it turns out you are in a fishing trip – having this information helps the employer see if they can find you a role that will fit. It's a bit odd – but this is New Zealand!

## **LAYOUT**

**6/ Make my life easy:** Especially if I'm a recruitment agent.

Put your contact details on a separate page at the end of the CV. This allows the agent to easily remove the information before sending your pristine CV on to that prime employer. You don't want to have spent hours slaving over the formatting of your CV, to find it all messed up by someone else. Again, it's your dream life, in that plum job; don't leave things to dumb chance.

**7/ Make the layout clear and obvious: Don't make me think!**

If I look at your CV and have to try and figure out what is one section, what is a different job etc., then I'm going to be spending more time working out how to read your CV, than being impressed by the great content.

**8/ Spelling and grammar:**

Use the spelling & grammar checkers. Then print your CV out and proof read it again, because a computer doesn't know if you meant there, their or they're. Being spell checked, doesn't mean it makes sense. I'm amazed by the number of CV's I've seen which have spelling mistakes, or just poor grammar. Sometimes you won't see that on the screen, so always print your CV out to check what the whole thing looks like on paper.

**9/ Using Acronyms:**

Always explain acronyms the first time you use them in the CV, no matter how obvious they may seem to you. The interviewer may not be technically savvy enough to understand all your skills, however they're the one deciding whether to employ you or not. If you're not clear and unambiguous on your CV, they could easily assume your acronym means something else.

[For example, Australian head office decided to rename our department to IHC, Integrated Horizontal Capabilities - no we didn't know what it meant either! IHC in NZ stands for Intellectually Handicapped Children [IHC](#) a charity doing community work. Something like that could easily confuse or cause offence.]

**10/ Don't write long lists of skills:**

A very long list of different technical skills or certifications doesn't tell me anything good. It does however tell me;

- 1) You can't write in sentences,
- 2) You don't explain acronyms to the un-initiated,
- 3) You've possibly spent more time in an examination room gaining knowledge, than actually gaining the experience first hand.

So what to do? I still list my top 20-ish skills, technical and non-technical in an easy to read table, showing how long I've had those skills for, my level of experience on a scale of Intermediate-Advanced-Expert. A mix of levels and durations shows that you

are growing new skills, and while you may have worked with some skills for a long time, you don't consider yourself an expert on absolutely everything.

Skill – All current unless noted {November 2008}	Level	Length of time used
Problem Determination	Expert	12 years
Coffee Appreciation	Expert	6 years
Presentations	Advanced	12 years
Beach bumming	Advanced	4 years
Ability to take meetings in a cafe	Advanced	4 years
Common Criteria / ISO 15408	Advanced	2 years
Cryptography	Intermediate	5 years
BBQ Cooking	Intermediate	4 years
Surfing	Intermediate	2 years

[I'm used to rating my skills on the IBM scale of 1-5 which we have to update every so often,

1=I've heard of it & have No knowledge & No Experience *{I can spell it}*

through to

5=I'm a world wide expert and practically invented it. *{Got last years Nobel Prize don't you know?}*

I don't include skills rated as a 1 or 2 on the CV, as you're not going to give me a job based on my conversational Arabic or experience of Java (I can install it)].

### **11/ Create Maximum Impact:**

Summarise the key points on the first page, and grab the reader's attention. It's easier said than done, but summarise your key achievements in a \$\$ value if possible. Think about using some graphics on the front page. Bear in mind – the more money you are asking for – the more flash you can be – but you still need to be careful. No-one likes a smartarse – especially in New Zealand.

## **GENERAL**

### **12/ Be Consistent:**

If you mention a particular highlight in your professional summary or personal profile, then elaborate further on that in the relevant part of the CV. If you say you're goal orientated, talk about specific goals you've achieved. Otherwise it looks a bit silly.

### **13/ Make sure your CV has Substance:**

There has to be substance, written in proper English sentences. Yes it may be inefficient to write out good words, however it will come across better than a load of capital letters. A CV consisting of just lists of skills, or loads of acronyms doesn't tell me anything positive.

### **14/ Talk up your Achievements - but don't be arrogant about it:**

This is vitally important. Too many people write their CV as a job description, telling the reader the different tasks they performed on a day-to-day basis. That's all about the job, nothing about you. Talk about what you contributed to the role, what you achieved. Detailing the tasks of an office administrator, doesn't tell me that you actually migrated all twelve of your office colleagues from 1930's typewriters kicking

and screaming into the 21st century with modern PC based business applications with fully integrated workflow and mail merge capabilities.

Don't be arrogant about it though. This is one of those odd NZ things. Most Kiwi's doing their OE and getting a job in London (or where ever) are attractive to employers because they have a wide range of skills, a can do attitude, and have experience covering more than their specialised field. This is what NZ employers are expecting to see from candidates, even if (as in the UK) you are a highly technical pre-sales specialist for blue widgets. If you don't know red widgets, or can't repair a multifunction thingamajig, then you are less attractive to the average NZ employer. They want to know you can turn your hand to different roles, have diverse technical experience and are willing to do whatever may be needed. A large organisation in NZ is any employer with more than 300 staff. So most organisations expect their people to have multiple roles within the company. This may not be familiar territory for many non-kiwi candidates. So even if you didn't achieve great things on that stint developing a marketing plan for red wotsits, it at least shows you know what a marketing plan is, you've worked with red wotsits, and can persuade others to buy them.

### **15/ Why Me?**

What additional value are you adding that won't cost your new employer a penny?  
What do you bring to the party?

This is where you're going to stand out from the rest of the candidate crowd. You need to be able to tell your employer what it is you have that they just can't do without. It is hard for most people to jump up and down and say "I'm the greatest thing since sliced bananas" – but this is where you can do it without coming across as a total plonker. Do you have language skills? Do you have training skills? Could you use any of these for the companies benefit on top of doing the fabulous job you can already do with your eyes closed? Do you have links to industry organisations you can use to the benefit of the company?

### **AND FINALLY**

#### **16/ Figure out the first questions:**

Having printed out your CV, corrected typo's, grammar and sorted out a clear layout, sit down and read your CV as if you were interviewing yourself. What are the first six questions that occur to you? Sometimes it best to get a friend to do this part. Then take those questions, and answer them in the CV. You then avoid spending time answering 'obvious' questions with the agent or interviewer, and it shows to the savvy interviewer that you've thought of them.