

How the job ad writes your CV for you

Clare Whitmell digs into the language used in job ads and explains how you can use your CV to prove to employers you've got what it takes.

Job descriptions and candidate profiles give you an excellent insight into what employers want. Essential skills are generally listed for technical roles, but for many others, the same "attitude" qualities crop up. Here are ways of proving these in your applications.

A passion to work in, keen interest in, enthusiastic, hardworking

If you see this in a job ad, it probably means you'll be working long hours so you'll need all that enthusiasm to get you through. Highlight your personal drive and determination to get the job done with phrases such as "Dedicated myself to", "Persisted in", "Pursued", "Volunteered for" or "Sought out opportunities to" and stress the results of your hard work with "Exceeded targets/surpassed expectations with..."

Prove your interest in the sector or role with a clear focus in your CV. Prioritise any relevant voluntary or side-projects before an unrelated day job.

Remember: employers are inundated with applications and prefer candidates who show an interest in them. Make sure you say (in your cover letter) why you want the job and why you admire the company.

Good academic background, high-calibre graduates

Make your education section prominent, drawing attention to awards, honours, peer leadership etc in an "Academic Highlights" subsection. Use terminology such as "Consistently received top marks" and include glowing endorsements from tutors. If you see "X experience is essential" or "proven record in..." prioritise relevant experience over your education section.

Self-starter, proactive

Draw attention to occasions where you showed leadership or vision. Use verbs such as "Initiated", "Launched", "Spearheaded" or "Pioneered" and quantify your achievements.

Enjoy working in a team environment, excellent interpersonal skills

Highlight team efforts, with vocabulary such as "Collaborated", "Liaised", "Co-ordinated", "Worked closely with... to achieve... "

Excellent attention to detail, communication skills

Find specific examples of how you used these skills, such as in proofreading, editing or presenting information. You can also use words such as "Summarised", "Repackaged" or "Reformatted" to show your ability to convey a message to different audiences.

Organised, ability to juggle multiple projects, work with minimum supervision

Examples from both your education and work experience can show ability to prioritise workload or to work on multiple projects at a time. Use terms like "Balanced the demands of X and Y", "Handled numerous projects simultaneously", "Allocated X resources to" or "Entrusted with".

Thrive under pressure, fast-paced competitive environment

The employer wants reassurance that you won't panic under stress. Emphasise examples of high performance in difficult environments, such as working to limited time or resources. Many roles - such as in sales, call centres, customer service or even general office experience - will have sharpened your ability to think on your feet and to respond appropriately.

One way to highlight key personality traits is to put them in a tagline under a job heading, for example, under your name and contact details, make the job title the heading of your CV (ie sales executive). Then under that, choose three characteristics that qualify you for that role. (For example: Ambitious | Calm under pressure | Great phone manner). Personal qualities can also go in a profile section.

Stable CV

In other words, an unblemished, unbroken record of employment with evidence of promotion and increased responsibilities. Use a reverse chronological format to show career progression. Make sure you account for any gaps and include testimonials from letters of reference or performance appraisals.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/careers/careers-blog/cvs-job-ad-application>