



2. Marketing Yourself: CVs, Resumes, and Networking

Tooling Up: Resume Rocket Science 2007

From: dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.caredit.a0700009

By David G. Jensen— First published January 19, 2007

Lots of articles and books have been written about resumes and CVs, including previous pieces on *Science Careers* (see the further reading section below). I generally avoid this topic; in fact, I haven't given a single "CV workshop" in two decades of presentations about science-career issues.

Why? It is often a no-man's-land of bad career advice, with no agreement on anything and books full of information that doesn't work for scientists.

Should it be a one-page resume or a multipage CV for that industry job application? One adviser tells you that only one- or two-page resumes work for company managers, whereas another tells you that you will do best to simply modify your academic CV by adding an "Objective Statement" to the top. In each and every "Q," you will find "A's" that fall into a dozen different camps, editorializing on their preferences and how they would structure it if it were their document. Someone who cares about writing the perfect CV

or resume will find enough discrepancy to keep the resume project going for months. Therein lies the problem: There's no such thing as the perfect CV.

So, given my reticence about pursuing this topic, why have I decided to take it on now? I couldn't stay away when I saw the passion in the responses to a recent thread on the AAAS *Science* Careers Forum that takes on this subject. Besides, I have more than two decades worth of experience in looking at what most people agree is the right document, the industry CV. Let's dissect one!

Should You Care About Writing the Perfect Resume or CV?

I may sound unorthodox when I say that you really don't need to be *all that* concerned about writing the perfect CV or resume. If you are interested in an industry job, you want your CV to open doors as it gets routed from person to person inside an organization. But you also want it to represent you accurately when you make a good networking connection.

Industry managers are used to looking at documents that aren't perfect. I'll take a *good* resume or CV over a perfect one any day of the week because the good one can be done in a short time, allowing plenty of time for networking—indisputably the single most important step in a job search—whereas writing the perfect document could take you (*and* your CV or resume) out of circulation for months.

This column uses advice gleaned through dozens of interviews conducted in January 2007 with hiring managers, human resources executives, recruiters, and consultants working in many different science-related niches. As expected, I came across differing opinions—some of my sources contradict each other—but enough common threads emerged to give the reader plenty of confidence that the CV or resume will do its job and not embarrass you. And that's exactly what you want it to do.

CV or Resume? The First Big Area of Confusion

Don't get befuddled by the "resume vs. CV" question. A resume is just a really short CV, with a lot more self-promotion than a CV would dare include. It's something you would use if you were looking for a sales job. A CEO might use a one-pager when looking for her own job. It's more like a really big business card, with just enough sentences about the last great accomplishment to hook the reader.

If you are a scientist looking to get your first job in industry, you should generally send what we'll refer to from this point on as an "industry CV." This document has elements of both a resume and a CV. It needs to attract interest and accurately describe what you can do for the employer. But it's not the same thing as an academic CV, which is an exhaustive, nonselective rehashing of everything you've ever done in your life—every publication, every presentation, every time you ever went to the bathroom. Okay, just kidding on that last point.

Cantankerous Issues—and Some Areas of Agreement

The biggest area of differing opinion seems to lie in the recommended length for an industry CV. Academic CVs can run 10 pages or more for a scientist with a decade of experience. Although everyone I interviewed agreed that this aca-

Get a summary statement up front, to describe your area of specialty and a few of your qualifications, and then fill out the detail in the work experience paragraphs below.

demical length would be inappropriate for industry, hiring managers have varying opinions about how much they want to see from their applicants:

- “I’d recommend no more than two pages,” said Ken Kodilla, vice president of manufacturing at Neogen Corporation (Lansing, Michigan), “but more importantly, I think that formatting issues are critical.”
- “Two or three pages would be OK, just don’t send me a too-long academic version. If you have 10 or 12 published papers, just list the three or four most important ones,” says Dr. Burt Ensley, an entrepreneur and angel investor who has launched several companies, and who earned his stripes at Amgen.
- “I like to see three or four pages of information that is relevant to the job at hand, plus an appended publications list,” said one director of research at a large pharmaceutical company who wished to remain anonymous. “It’s not all that different from an academic CV, but please don’t forget the personal contact information at the top—home address, phone, and even cell phone.”

My own recommendation has always been to write this document as succinctly as possible. The average length for an industry CV for someone coming out of a postdoc and going into industry is three or four pages, including publications, and I don’t think any of my contacts, even those above, would have issues with a well-written and nicely formatted three-pager that includes publications.

Modifying Your Academic CV to Work As an Industry CV

Some experts recommend trashing your academic CV and starting fresh with a few new ideas of how to present themselves. Others say that you can simply update and improve it, focusing on the following categories:

Contact information. As mentioned above, make it clear how to connect with you in your personal time. “Put it in bold text. H/R tells us that we can’t contact you at your place of work, so you will need to have home address and phone there for this purpose,” said one of my anonymous pharma contacts.

Summary. I found considerable resistance to leading off the CV with a statement of your career objectives. This really took me by surprise. That brief paragraph below the contact information is very commonplace (i.e., “Seeking a responsible position in an industry lab doing cancer research.”) But I found that most hiring managers believe that a “summary” statement is preferable.

“I like to see resumes that start off with a summary of what they bring to the table,” said Donna Dimke, senior director of human resources at Human Genome Sciences (Rockville, Maryland). Pat Abbott, principal consultant at Venture Forward Partners, a Boston

biotech consulting firm, agrees with Donna. “Get a summary statement up front, to describe your area of specialty and a few of your qualifications, and then fill out the detail in the work experience paragraphs below.”

Education. Jim Calvin, vice president at On Assignment/Lab Support (Princeton, New Jersey), says, “Make sure your educational information is easily decipherable and that it can be gleaned within the first few seconds of viewing the resume, which means up front instead of after the Experience section. Also, it helps to have the Ph.D. following your name at the top—you’ve earned it.” There was wide agreement on this one.

Professional experience. Universally, hiring managers and human resources people want to see your work experience listed in reverse chronological order. Never, ever get into those alternative layouts you see written about in books for the lay public. “I sometimes see all these great things that someone has accomplished, but without the specific detail of where and when they have done those things,” said Don Bergmann, senior vice president at Tengion, Inc., in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. Bergmann is referring to the “functional style” resume so often described in resume books. It is clear from everyone I spoke with, and from my own experience, that you veer from this reverse chronological order only at your own peril.

Publications. Here’s another area where you’ll find a great variety of opinion. Industry managers, in general, are far less concerned about seeing every one of your publications than the academic hiring committee you were trying to impress when you put together your academic CV. I agree with Burt Ensley, who said that only your most important publications need be present. The goal is to conserve space and keep it short and readable. You can always add, “Full publications list sent upon request.”

David Bomzer, a former *Science Careers* columnist and a senior H/R professional, reminded me that an industry CV “doesn’t focus exclusively on technical knowledge. Your technical knowledge, education, thesis topic, and publications [sections are] usually *just the price* of entry for being considered.” In an industry CV, Bomzer says, there’s a subtle point-of-view difference. More on Bomzer’s point in this article’s closing section.

Skills and techniques. Many people include an area like this on their industry CV, and there is nothing wrong with it unless you go overboard. “Sure, I want to know what skills you have, but I want an honest assessment. If I see that you are ‘skilled’ in 50 different techniques, I know with some degree of certainty that you are being a bit lenient with the word ‘skilled.’ If you can do a technique right now without any help, then you are skilled in it,” said frequent forum contributor Ken Flanagan of Genentech about this topic area. Most of my hiring-manager friends like to see skills in evidence on the CV, but they caution me that it can paint you into a box, so you should adapt your skills and techniques section to the job you are applying to. Better yet, incorporate this skills information into the brief descriptions you give of the work involved in each job listing.

Bomzer's 'Subtle Point-of-View' Shift Gives Your Document More Punch

Earlier in this piece, I described a resume as having a great deal more self-promotion in it than a CV. The same is true of the industry CV, which aims to grab a bit of that promotion and focus it on the employer's needs. You certainly don't want to put out a CV that makes you look like a sales rep candidate (unless that's the kind of job you are applying for!), but you must consider the document you've prepared from the viewpoint of the reader. The industry CV needs to answer—or allow the person reading it to answer for him or herself—questions like these: What can this person do to help us solve the problems we are facing? Will this person bring a set of skills and abilities that mesh with what we have now?

In closing, let me pass along the advice of an industry hiring manager, friend, and adviser:

A mediocre CV (stylistically, not with respect to your actual expertise and accomplishments) and a lot of networking is guaranteed to get you a job. A stunning CV and no networking is equivalent to playing lotto. —Kevin Foley, Ph.D.

Writing a Winning Cover Letter

From: sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2006_03_10/DOI.4819437018278975029

By John K. Borchardt— First published March 10, 2006

Your curriculum vitae cover letter is both an introduction and a sales pitch. "It should show what sets this individual apart from all others," advises professor Jeffrey Stansbury, chair of the faculty search committee at the Department of Craniofacial Biology of the University of Colorado School of Dentistry in Denver. Like any good sales pitch, your cover letter should motivate the customer to learn more about the product—in this case, you.

A good cover letter, like a good sales pitch, has several characteristics. First, like a good doctor, it does no harm; it avoids making a negative impression. Second, it demonstrates that the product suits the consumer's—your future employer's—specific needs. Third, it assures the customer that the quality of the product (you!) is superb. Accomplishing all this is easier said than done. So how do you write a cover letter that will do you justice and earn an interview? First you need a plan.

The Objective

"A successful candidate impresses the committee right off with the cover letter and makes the committee members actually want

RESU
The industry
CV needs
to answer
questions
like these:
What can this
person do to
help us solve
the problems
we are facing?
Will this
person bring
a set of skills
and abilities
that mesh with
what we
have now?

to dig through the CV and recommendation letters to pull out the details that start to validate the positive claims,” says Stansbury. “It also provides a glimpse into the applicant’s personality and gives some guidance as to whether or not they can communicate in an organized, effective way.”

One of the most important jobs of any good sales pitch is to avoid doing harm. Some cover letters, says Robert Horvitz, chair of MIT’s Biology Department search committee, may inadvertently convey negative impressions of a candidate, especially if they “look sloppy or indicate an inability to communicate in English.” “These things can kill someone’s chances,” adds Kenton Whitmire, chair of the Chemistry Department at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

Horvitz adds that cover letters “should be neat and professional” and fit on one page. Whitmire would allow applicants a bit more room; the letter, he says, should be “no longer than one to two pages.” To keep it short, “the cover letter should not reproduce the information in the CV, publications list, or other documents provided,” says Whitmire, “but it should be used as a vehicle to highlight those things that the candidate believes will make him/her a good match for the position at hand.”

The Match

An effective cover letter doesn’t just emphasize your best qualities; it also shows how well those qualities are likely to mesh with the open position. “Applicants should begin by reading advertisements for faculty positions carefully and be sure that their background and goals are appropriate for the position in question. You lose credibility if you can’t make a case that you fit the ad,” says Whitmire. “If the cover letter is to be effective, it must definitely be tailored to the particular institution.”

“There’s no excuse for not writing a cover letter that shows how your education, experience, and interests fit with what the institution is seeking,” warns Julia Miller Vick, co-author of the *Academic Job Search Handbook* (University of Pennsylvania Press, July 2001). “Not doing this would reflect laziness,” observes Horvitz. At best, adds Vick, “a form letter or one that is generic doesn’t accomplish much and leaves how the application is reviewed completely up to the reviewing committee.” At worst, a generic cover letter can make you seem undesirable.

“While many people applying for academic positions tend to think that the review process is an evaluation of their previous work—how good is it?—the issue that is as important is the match,” says Whitmire. “How will this person fit in here? The former is necessary, but the decision to interview will often be made upon research area or some other measure of fit to the department’s needs at that moment in time.”

Planning

Begin by learning about the department in general and the open position in particular. Department websites are a good starting point, but don’t stop there; go beyond the public information and seek a sense of perspective. “It is best if candidates speak with their advisers/mentors to get some feel for the institution where they wish to apply,” Whitmire suggests. Close senior colleagues can serve the same purpose. Read beyond the job ad and figure out what they’re really looking for.



Once you've got a fix on the institution, the department, and the open position, ask yourself what abilities or special qualities a candidate needs to excel in that position. Then determine which of your qualifications and accomplishments will particularly interest this department. Think about your research plans, past research accomplishments, special projects, and previous employment.

What evidence can you put forward that your background and plans prepare you well for this opening? How well do your research interests match those described in the advertisement? How well will they complement the work of the current faculty? How will your presence there make the department better? All this information will determine what to emphasize in your cover letter.

Writing the Body of the Letter

Your research accomplishments and plans should constitute the body of your cover letter for a research university position. At institutions where teaching is the primary emphasis, your primary focus should be your teaching experience, philosophy, and goals—and the suitability of your research program to a teaching-focused environment.

“An outline of plans for teaching and research needs to be specific to be meaningful,” says Stansbury. Focus on your most important two or three examples of proposed research projects and innovative teaching plans such as developing novel courses. These examples should change from one cover letter to another as you customize your letters for different jobs.

The Opening

After the body of your cover letter has been drafted, you come to the most critical step: writing an attention-getting introduction. Salespeople call this “having a handle.” Your handle is what you offer that makes you especially well qualified for a particular faculty opening. For example, summarizing how well your research interests match those the department advertised provides an effective letter opening.

The opening paragraph should be short but more than just one sentence. After you've captured the reader's attention with the handle, clearly but briefly summarize your most important—and relevant—qualifications. Anything less than a sharp focus, and your readers will quickly lose interest and move on to the next manila folder.

Closing the Letter

End your letter decisively. Don't let it meander to an indefinite or weak close. A strong close projects an image of you as an assertive, confident, and decisive person. It never hurts to close by requesting an interview.

Editing

Make your cover letter an example of your best writing by editing it carefully. It must be easy to read. Focus and clarity of expression in your letter imply focus and clarity of thought—very desirable qualities in a faculty member.

Then return to the critical issue—whether your research interests, other qualifications, and personality meet the search committee’s requirements. Anything that doesn’t accentuate the match should be ruthlessly deleted.

Then set your letter aside for a day or two before editing it again. The detachment you gain from this short break will help you see what you’ve written more clearly. Detachment makes it easier to determine whether your paragraphs flow smoothly from one to the next. The logic that seemed so obvious when you were writing may seem much less so a day or two later. Carefully review both your cover letter and CV to be sure the information in them is perfectly consistent. Often, a committee won’t bother to try to resolve any discrepancies they find; they’ll just move on to the next application.

Finally, Whitmire advises, “Be sure to have your cover letter reviewed by someone [who] can be trusted and who has experience. Often, getting a second opinion about how something sounds to the reader—i.e., what they got from reading the letter, not what you intended in writing it—can be very valuable.”

E-Persona Non Grata: Strategizing Your Online Persona

From: dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.caredit.a0800112

By Peter Fiske— First published July 25, 2008

About three years ago, I was sitting at my desk at work, minding my own business, when I got an e-mail from a colleague inviting me to join LinkedIn. “What is this LinkedIn thing anyway,” I asked myself, “some sort of pyramid scam?” I thought highly of the person who sent me the invitation, so I went to the LinkedIn website to see what it was about. At the time, I didn’t see how it would help me, so I didn’t join.

A few months later, a summer intern who was working with me sent an e-mail inviting me to join his LinkedIn network. When I failed to respond after a few days, he confronted me. I admitted that I was not using the service. “I have spent years developing a professional reputation and building a network of colleagues and friends,” I told him. “Why would I want to show all that off to the rest of the world?”

More invitations came in. Eventually, one came from a very senior executive I regarded very highly. I could not refuse his invitation. I had no clue how a tool such as LinkedIn (or Facebook, or other social/business networking sites) would help me. I was now committed to finding out.

Connecting with people in different organizations and understanding who knows whom within your network are very powerful assets for professional advancement.

Your E-persona: It's More Than Just LinkedIn

Even if you refuse to sign up for any social-networking sites, there is information about you on the Internet. Are you familiar with the term “vanity Google”? If not, search online for it, then search for your name. It's interesting what comes up, isn't it? This is your e-persona: the record of yourself as preserved and presented on the web. Every employer considering hiring you will likely search online for your name. I do it with everyone who makes my shortlists.

Online social-networking sites can be a part of your e-persona, and unlike the Internet as a whole, you can control what is in your profile on these sites. For this reason alone, actively managing your e-persona through use of an online social network is a good idea. Like a well-composed resume or cover letter, a well-constructed e-persona reflects a measure of thoughtfulness, professionalism, and competence. Whether it's a personal website or your LinkedIn or Facebook profile, putting forward a consciously conceived professional image can't hurt.

The corollary is also true: Sophomoric, sarcastic, or inappropriate material can be a lasting liability. Many stories circulate about employers who checked out a prospective employee's Facebook page only to find embarrassing photos and comments.

Three Good Uses (and One Really Bad One) for Online Social-Networking Sites

Job searches: You can use online social-networking sites in a number of valuable ways for your job search. You can find contacts in companies or organizations that interest you through your network of friends and colleagues (and the people they know). You can research people in these companies and learn about their interests and backgrounds (a good way to prepare for interviews). You can also find people through your friends' networks who may be suitable for an informational interview; informational interviews can be a powerful means of investigating careers and employers that interest you--and signaling your interest in them.

Professional networking: Even when you are *not* looking for a job, you can use online social-networking sites to scan for opportunities. Connecting with people in different organizations and understanding who knows whom within your network are very powerful assets for professional advancement. I've found it interesting to observe how my network connects to those of my friends and have discovered several independent mutual acquaintances. In a few cases, this unexpected link has led to new opportunities. Many social-networking sites have an array of functions and features that allow you to search for people: past friends and colleagues, people who do interesting work at interesting companies, and so on. Some of these sites allow you to post and respond to questions, get recommendations, or get introduced to other experts.

Social networking: Online tools can help you find new and old friends and get connected to fun things that have nothing to do with work. From the formal (Match.com) to the informal (Craigslist.org), to Facebook, there are numerous ways to find others with bizarre and obscure interests similar to yours. Staying connected to your classmates and alums from your past schools could be especially valuable; there's no clear distinction, after all, between your personal and professional networks. For foreign national grad students and postdocs, this may be particularly important: Your expatriate community can be a powerful and highly motivated resource network for you. Facebook allows users to very easily set up affinity groups of people with similar interests.

Collecting Links and Friends for the Sake of High Numbers (Hint: A Bad Idea)

Even with a clear idea of what you hope to accomplish with these social-networking tools, it's easy to misuse or overuse them. I have come across profiles of folks on Facebook who claim to have more than 500 friends and folks on LinkedIn with 500-plus contacts; I suspect their definition of "friend" is more elastic than mine. If you linked to every single person who ever gave you a business card, you probably could, over time, accumulate 500-plus links. But how many of these people would remember you? And does this large but undifferentiated list of links do anything more for you than provide the world with a copy of your address book?

So, whom should you include on your list of links or of friends? If the person called you at work, would you take his or her call? If so, then he or she probably would be appropriate for your LinkedIn network. If this person called you on Friday evening, would you take his or her call? If so, accept their offer of Facebook friendship. Do you send out Christmas cards to 500 people every year?

It is okay to "delink" people from your network if you discover that the contact is not valuable or is never used; most sites make the "delinking" process invisible to the other party. Experts recommend that you periodically cull your list of contacts and throw out the ones who aren't active.

The Warm Contact Always Wins

The power and sheer multitude of web-based networking tools underscores a fundamental fact: Your real network, not a bunch of names in the Friends column of Facebook, is your most important professional and personal asset. Your network will be the source of your future employment, many of your future friends and colleagues, and, quite often, your spouse.

Online tools expand the ways you can connect to others, but they cannot substitute for face-to-face encounters. Whether in an informational interview, a professional mixer, or a social gathering, personal contact imparts momentum to your job search and professional life. If you have a choice between adding five more connections to your LinkedIn list or going out to lunch with a member of your network, choose lunch.



Additional Articles Online

Tooling Up: Defying Gravity

dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.caredit.a0800124

Tooling Up: On Headhunters

dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.caredit.a0800058

Tooling Up: Put Some Muscle Into Your Marketing Materials

dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.caredit.a0800026

Maximizing Productivity and Recognition, Part 2: Collaboration and Networking

dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.caredit.a0800016

Tooling Up: Negotiating Boot Camp

sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2005_07_15/noDOI.3409186995344468720

The Dreaded Phone Interview

sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2006_03_17/tooling_up_the_dreaded_phone_interview

The Real Deal vs. Well-Oiled: Who Gets the Offer?

sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/3710/tooling_up_the_real_deal_vs_well_oiled_who_gets_the_offer

This booklet is also available online at sciencecareers.org/careerbasicspdf