

CV spotting

CHALLENGES AROUND FINDING THE RIGHT CV.

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(a) An article published on 1 October 2008 in theage.com.au had a most intriguing headline: "CVs – the lying game." While it is generally acknowledged that around one in four CVs has been "embellished," the submission of a CV remains a very important step, and the first step in the interview process.

Properly executed, the CV provides a very important snapshot of a candidate's educational and work history. As such, it provides a good starting point for screening prospective candidates.

What should the HR recruiter look for? The first impression is very important. Has care been taken in the presentation? Has the candidate completed a spell check, or are there glaring spelling mistakes? Does the individual pay attention to detail? Has the CV been presented electronically

or in hard copy?

If a candidate is applying for a position as a graphic designer, you would expect some demonstration of creativity. The same, however, would not hold true for a candidate who is applying for a position as an accountant.

A good CV provides a good understanding of the individual. There are usually important clues about the type of personality that one is dealing with. While this information is not always included in CVs, it may be useful, nevertheless. Does the candidate participate in sport or any cultural activities? Is the individual a team player? Has the individual demonstrated leadership? Is the candidate a well-rounded individual?

A good track record is always very important. The CV should paint a good picture of the candidate's work experience over the past ten years. There should not be any interruptions or unaccounted for periods, nor any glaring omissions. Gaps, particularly with respect to reasons for leaving a previous employer, should serve as a red flag. Job-hopping is another reason for concern, as this usually indicates an employment trend.

HR professionals need to be mindful of over-screening. They often try to find the perfect match. This is akin to looking for a needle in the haystack. The situation is often exacerbated by the fact that the job specifications may have been written based on the employee who previously held the position. This individual may have possessed an unusual or unique skills set, which is often very difficult to replicate, and may not necessarily be a prerequisite for success. It is also important to recognise that when a candidate writes her CV it is not written with a specific job in mind. Because the candidate is not

privy to what the recruiter is looking for, the candidate is unable to tick all the boxes.

An 80% match is a very good match. It is important too, to recognise, that candidate may have left out some of his or her work experience, deeming the ability to perform certain tasks as standard for a particular position.

The Department of Labour provides very clear guidelines regarding the types of questions that may be asked. While age, race, gender and religion may be of interest to the recruiter, this information need not to appear on the CV.

Candidates are often asked to submit a shortened CV, using a rigid template. I personally dislike this approach as a lot of pertinent information is generally missing. This approach makes it nearly impossible to differentiate between candidates and does not provide any insights into the person.

The covering letter constitutes a vital component of the candidate's personal marketing. It is also a very important indicator of professionalism. Has the candidate demonstrated that she has read the advertisement properly? Has she explained why she is interested in the position? Does the candidate meet the job requirements and specifications? Has she convinced you that she is well suited to the position?

Once CVs have been short-listed, and candidates interviewed, references should be carefully checked to ensure that the CV is a fair and true reflection of the candidate's achievements to date. Integrity checks, such as qualification checks should also be conducted to verify qualifications. Only once these steps have been completed, should any hiring decision be made. *(HRJ)*