

CHAPTER 6: CV VOCABULARY

**'Short words are best and the old words,
when short, are best of all.'**

(SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL)

HEADINGS FOR THE SECTIONS OF YOUR CV

- Profile / Professional Profile / Overview / Summary / At A Glance / Thumbnail Sketch
- Core Competencies / Key Skills / Skillset / Principal Skills / Notable Skills
- Key Achievements / Major Contributions / Track Record
- Career to Date / Career & Achievements / Professional Progression / Career & Accomplishments / Relevant Career Details / Work Experience / Professional Background
- Education / Qualifications / Education & Accreditations / Education & Training / Professional Development / Training
- Publications / Presentations / Research Interests / Selected Publications
- Professional Memberships / Professional Associations and Development
- Extra-curricular Activities / Outside Interests / Interests / Hobbies / Pastimes
- Contact Details / Contact & Personal Details
- References / Referees / Supporting References / Professional References

THE SCOPE OF THE JOB THAT YOU DO/DID

- My remit included ...
- My purview ...
- Core responsibilities included ...
- Highlights: *(followed by a pithy, bulleted list)*
- My central function was ...
- My brief encompassed ...
- My primary function was ...
- I was tasked with ...
- Along with the typical responsibilities of the role, I also had the following brief ...
- My duties included ... (*'duties' as a descriptive implies a relatively junior position – careful!*)

DESCRIPTIVE TERMS TO USE ABOUT YOURSELF

- **Professional** / Conscientious / Specialised / Meticulous / Disciplined / Responsible / Reliable / Efficient / Diligent
- **Strong** / Adept / Sound / Effective / Successful / Thorough / Accomplished / Well developed / Above average / Confident
- **Excellent** / Exceptional / Outstanding / Superior / Highly developed / High capacity
- **Innovative** / Creative / Diverse / Inventive / Original / Resourceful / Ingenious / Imaginative
- **Strategic** / Pro-active / Clear / Astute / Measured / Cogent / Incisive / Shrewd / Coherent
- **Flexible** / Adaptable / Open / Versatile / Accommodating
- **Trusted** / Well regarded / Reputation gained with / Respected / Valued / Esteemed
- **Competitive** / Ambitious / Progressive / Tenacious / Market-driven / Results-driven / Goal-oriented / Performance-focused / Determined
- **Proven** / Demonstrable / Track record in / Comfortable with / Familiar with / Adept with / At ease with / Full knowledge of / In-depth knowledge of / Skilled in / Confirmed / Verified
- **Successful** / Consistent / Seasoned / Highly experienced / Effective / Senior / Dependable / Unfailing
- **Committed** / Motivated / Highly motivated / Dedicated / Staunch / Loyal / Enthusiastic / Keen
- **Tangible** / Concrete / Substantial / Material / Significant
- **Diplomatic** / Sensitive / Tactful / Judicious / Subtle / Prudent / Perceptive / Discreet
- **Blue-chip** / World-class / Industry leader / Market leading (*all of these would refer to the companies you have worked with*)

TOOTHsome VERBS

Where possible, you should start your ‘*what I did*’ sentences with a good strong verb. It obviates the need for you to write ‘I’ and, if you present the ‘*what I did*’ material in list or bullet-point format, it immediately draws the reader’s eye down the list. You will notice that all of the verbs here are in the past tense – this reinforces the sense of accomplishment.

- **Increased** / Grew / Developed / Expanded / Improved / Raised / Heightened / Enlarged / Broadened / Diversified / Accelerated / Optimised / Augmented / Delivered / Produced / Maximised / Accrued / Outperformed / Accumulated / Overcame / Exceeded (expectations or targets) / Surpassed

- **Won** / Beat / Succeeded / Achieved / Performed / Executed / Delivered / Accomplished / Secured / Anticipated / Compelled / Forced / Precluded / Prevented / Averted / Impeded
- **Reduced** / Minimised / Diminished / Saved / Lessened / Halved / Shortened (usually time or lead times) / Trimmed / Stemmed / Eliminated (usually waste) / Dispensed (with the need for) / Eradicated / Curtailed / Obviated (the need for) / Generated savings / Lightened
- **Initiated** / Started / Began / Launched / Founded / Activated / Instigated / Introduced / Set up
- **Developed** / Devised / Pioneered / Designed / Formulated / Originated / Discovered / Conceived / Generated / Created / Built / Commissioned / Formed (usually a team) / Assembled (a team) / Staffed / Established / Installed / Constructed / Planned / Composed
- **Instructed** / Ordered / Taught / Guided / Tutored / Coached / Piloted / Mentored / Appraised / Reviewed / Trained / Upskilled / Cross-trained
- **Deferred** / Put Off / Pushed back / Postponed / Adjourned / Suspended / Extended
- **Led** / Drove / Directed / Spearheaded / Headed / Central role in ... / Managed / Supervised / Oversaw / Presided / Project managed / Co-ordinated / Facilitated / Arranged / Organised / Monitored / Controlled / Assigned / Budgeted / Scheduled / Rostered
- **Supplanted** / Replaced / Displaced / Superseded / Succeeded / Overtook / Surpassed / Took over from
- **Represented** / Epitomised / Stood for / Characterised / Spoke for / Symbolised / Embodied
- **Supported** / Provided / Sustained / Buttressed / Strengthened / Fortified / Reinforced / Complied with / Encouraged / Motivated / Inspired / Assisted / Stimulated / Released management from / Lightened (the load of something or somebody)
- **Worked closely with** / Collaborated / Liaised with / Consulted widely / Interacted / Consulted appropriately / Consulted with stakeholders / Co-operated / Worked together with
- **Analysed** / Captured (information) / Examined / Identified / Probed / Highlighted / Studied / Diagnosed / Uncovered / Detected / Evaluated / Defined / Calculated / Researched / Investigated
- **Sold** / Marketed / Brokered / Negotiated / Persuaded / Influenced / Espoused / Publicised / Represented / Promoted / Gained approval for / Lobbied / Gained a foothold in / Broke into
- **Enhanced** / Improved / Developed / Streamlined / Standardised / Tightened up / Put shape on / Shaped / Structured / Edited / Reorganised / Updated / Renewed / Modernised / Redesigned / Modified / Revamped / Overhauled / Effected change / Rearranged / Transformed / Restructured / Changed / Refined / Converted / Altered / Change managed / Revolutionised / Simplified / Revised
- **Disseminated** / Distributed / Allocated / Supplied / Circulated / Spread

- **Submitted** / Posited / Presented / Contributed / Tabled / Suggested / Urged / Served as / Pitched / Positioned / Illustrated / Related / Recommended / Advised / Counselling / Imposed / Steered / Outlined
- **Transitioned** / Moved / Shifted / Combined / Transferred / Relocated / Redeployed / Repositioned / Shuffled / Rearranged
- **Approved** / Endorsed / Permitted / Enabled / Authorised / Empowered / Consented to / Enacted / Sanctioned / Agreed / Concurred / Gained consensus
- **Implemented** / Brought to conclusion / Consolidated / Finalised / Resolved / Completed / Concluded / Settled / Firmed up / Ended
- **Recognised for** / Consistently recognised for / Praised for / Selected by management to / Singled out to ...
- **XXXXXX focused** (e.g. Customer-focused, Quality-focused, Sales-driven, Target-oriented, Results-focused)
- **Gained approval for** / Suggested and implemented / Promoted / Identified the need for / Highlighted / Mounted a campaign for
- **Ensured** / Guaranteed / Made certain / Leveraged / Expedited / Gained advantage by / Forced / Eased
- **Administered** / Ran / Conducted / Undertook to / Processed / Maintained / Fostered / Handled / Dealt with / Implemented / Enforced
- **Recruited** / Selected / Hired / Interviewed / Enlisted / Attracted / Drafted / Appointed
- **Garnered** / Collated / Gained / Procured / Purchased / Acquired / Compiled / Attained / Obtained / Collected / Extracted / Removed / Took out / Pulled out
- **Utilised** / Made use of / Applied / Exploited / Employed / Operated / Exercised / Drew on
- **Mediated** / Interceded / Reconciled / Brought solution about / Brought together / Arbitrated / Unified
- **Verified** / Confirmed / Tested / Checked / Determined / Authenticated / Traced / Proved / Demonstrated / Audited / Inspected / Reviewed / Documented / Substantiated / Reconciled / Corroborated
- **Restored** / Remedied / Mended / Repaired / Stabilised / Reinstated / Corrected / Returned / Rebuilt / Fixed / Revitalised / Renewed / Revived / Breathed life back into / Rejuvenated / Rectified
- **Interpreted** / Translated / Deduced / Deciphered / Unravelling / Worked out / Solved
- **Criticised** / Assessed / Disparaged / Censured / Critiqued

- **Protected** / Defended / Preserved / Secured / Conserved / Retained / Safeguarded / Upheld / Thwarted (competitor) / Blunted (someone else's efforts) / Prevented / Stopped / Impeded / Forestalled / Hindered / Obstructed / Avoided / Evaded / Diverted
- **Decided** / Determined (the outcome) / Chose / Took the decision to / Fixed on / Opted for / Elected to (do something)
- **Specified** / Detailed / Stipulated / Denoted / Indicated / Delineated / Itemised / Insisted upon
- **Forecasted** / Foresaw / Predicted / Anticipated / Foretold / Envisaged
- **Prepared** / Readied / Made ready / Set / Made plans for / Laid out
- **Declined** / Rejected / Rebuffed / Refused / Turned down

QUALIFIERS

Adverbs give us more information about the words that we use, typically verbs (*he went **quickly** to ...*) but also adjectives (*the music was **too quiet** to hear*) and other adverbs (***terribly** slowly.*)

Three *caveats*:

1. Don't overuse adverbs. It gets tiresome when everything you write is qualified in this way. If in doubt, pick a stronger verb and kill off the adverb.
2. It is still considered bad form to finish a sentence with an adverb – *He went there very quickly*. It reads better as, *He very quickly went there*.
3. Don't use hanging comparatives on your CV – *We completed the project more quickly*. More quickly than who or what? Advertisers use this technique all the time – *More music, less chatter*, trumpets the advertisement for the radio station. More music than who? Less chatter than who? Repeated often enough, catch-phrases like these become part of our vocabulary, but they are the kiss of death on a CV.

- **Quickly** / Rapidly / Swiftly / Promptly / Speedily / Briskly / Efficiently / Punctually / Without delay
- **Successfully** / Competently / Capably / Aably / Proficiently / Adeptly / Effectively / Responsibly
- **Cautiously** / Carefully / Judiciously / Prudently / Selectively / Discreetly / Tactfully
- **Consistently** / Constantly / Always / Unfailingly
- **Creatively** / Ingeniously / Resourcefully / Imaginatively
- **Decisively** / Resolutely / Definitely / Positively / Assertively
- **Flexibly** / Adaptively / Changeably

- **Enthusiastically** / Passionately / Earnestly / Keenly / Eagerly / Intensely / Ardently / Energetically / Vigorously
- **Slowly** / Gradually / Steadily / Progressively
- **Significantly** / Dramatically / Substantially / Radically / Considerably / Tremendously

STARTING OUT

Try to avoid the perpendicular pronoun 'I' when you are writing about yourself. Where possible, avoid writing, *'I moved to Widgets Incorporated as a Widgeting Engineer'*; instead use *'Appointed as Widgeting Engineer for ...'* or one of the other phrases below. Repeated use of 'I' in writing is somehow less acceptable than using the same term in a verbal delivery. Start your paragraphs with:

- Appointed
- Headhunted as
- Joined XXXX as
- Approached by XXXX to become ...
- Invited to join XXXX as
- Gained position as
- Offered full-time post as
- Invited to return to XXXX as

NIT-PICKING

One of my personal bugbears is the humble apostrophe. No one seems to know when to use and when not to use these little fellas. Get this right, because if you come across a nit-picker, your CV could end up in the bin for this very silly reason. Apostrophes serve two major functions:

1. To indicate missing letters.
2. To illustrate the possessive case.

People *constantly* get these mixed up!

MISSING LETTERS:

Can not	becomes	Can't
Do not	becomes	Don't
You are	becomes	You're (<i>your means belonging to you</i>)
Would not	becomes	Wouldn't
It is	becomes	It's

POSSESSIVE:

Belonging to that person – *That person's*

I worked there for five years – *I gained five years' experience*

The headlines for today – *Today's news headlines*

The most common mistake is the inclusion of an apostrophe in the possessive *its*. His, hers, *its*, ours, theirs, yours – these are what are known as *absolute possessives* and no apostrophe is required for any of them. If you write *It's* make damn sure you mean, '*It is.*'

'I cannot write five words but that I change seven.'

(DOROTHY PARKER)