

# SKILLS

## ACADEMY

S U P P O R T E D L E A R N I N G

## Creating Your Winning CV

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## Organise a successful job hunt

There are several different ways to hunt for a job, and to make your search more effective you should be trying different combinations of the following classic job hunting and networking techniques:

- Browse the job ads in newspapers (printed or online).
- Remember that most printed newspapers have a 'Career Guide' on a specific day.
- Contact recruitment agencies. If you work in a specialised field, try a recruitment agency that works in that field.
- Look at company websites: Many companies have a section on their website dedicated to recruitment; make it one of your 'favourites'.
- Browse online classifieds: There are so many different online classifieds for jobs; subscribe to their newsletters and post your CV on your favourite job websites.
- Sign up for job mailing lists.
- Make use of social media like LinkedIn: Make sure contacts know that you are searching for a job.
- Check in with people you already know.
- Contact people in the same industry as you.

Here are some of the most popular job portals in South Africa:

- <http://www.careers24.com/>
- <http://www.careerjunction.co.za/>
- <http://www.jobs.co.za/>
- <http://www.gumtree.co.za/>
- <http://www.careerjet.co.za/>
- <http://www.pnet.co.za/>
- <http://www.jobvine.co.za/>
- <http://www.bizcommunity.com/>
- <http://www.indeed.co.za/>



When searching for jobs online, it is quite easy to refine your search.

You can search using key words and location. This makes it easier for you to only see the job listings in your field. Searching for jobs in the right way and in the right places will increase your chances of finding the perfect position in your preferred area.

Remember that thousands of jobs get posted on these sites, which means that thousands of other job seekers are also looking at these positions, and competition can be tough, so make your CV and your cover letter count. (We will be discussing this in the next section)

## Understanding job listings

As you go through advertisements you have to decide whether a specific listing is suitable to your level of education and experience. The job description will tell you what you need to be able to do on a day to day basis. It will also give you very valuable tips on the type of company advertising the position. When you read the job description, ask yourself: 'Is this a job I can and want to do?'

Once you have read the job description and you like what you've read and you are interested in the job, look at the job requirements. The job requirements outline the specific academic qualifications, skills set and experience you need in order to be considered for the position. These are the minimum requirements, if you do not meet these, please think very carefully about the areas where you are lacking and reconsider applying for the job.

When considering the job requirements, ask yourself the following:

- Do I have the relevant qualifications (degree, diploma)? If not, and especially if it is a requirement for most of the job listings you see, consider studying further to bridge that gap.
- Do you have relevant industry experience? If not, how could you obtain the relevant experience?
- Can you use the computer software mentioned? If not, consider enrolling in a course that teaches you those skills.
- Do you meet the other skills and requirements?  
If not, consider speaking to your current employer about job development or set goals for yourself on how you are going to gain these skills.



## Using networking and social media to your advantage

Networking involves building mutually beneficial (everyone wins) relationships between yourself and another person or business. People mostly network to further their business and career goals. Networking will help you with:

- Finding employment
- Broadening your employment options
- Furthering your business and career opportunities
- Building your brand?
- Creating sustainable business connections and relationships
- Sharing ideas with more successful, and less successful, people in your industry

## Classic Networking

Networking can start as early as school or college. The network of friends, acquaintances, teachers, lecturers and coaches you meet during school and university/college could become business partners or clients in future. Networking is not just a one way street and it should include sharing information and contacts with others, introducing people, doing favours for others, and asking for and acknowledging assistance.

### Use existing networks

Many people do not utilise the network they already have to its full potential.

Do you know what your neighbours do for a living? Do you know what your friends do and what their parents do? You may be surprised at just how much potential for networking you already have all around you.

### Get a mentor

If you are having trouble finding contacts on your own then look for a mentor to help you network. Arrange interviews with people in your profession who you think would make a good mentor. Schedule meetings with potential mentors and prepare to make a good impression on them. Even if the person is not able to mentor you, they could put you in touch with someone who can or even contact you at a later stage with an offer.



You could also try finding mentoring programs by contacting business networks and looking on the internet.

There are a number of mentoring programmes that you can join on the internet:

- <http://www.vukamentorship.co.za/home.php>
- <http://www.mentoring4success.co.za/>
- <http://clutterbuckassociates.co.za/>

## Go to networking events

Look for networking events / clubs that are specific to your area of interest.

Many industries have breakfasts / lunches specifically geared to networking.

Make sure that you have business cards ready for these kinds of events as it is all about how you present yourself and how you can be contacted. A great way of finding these networks is by looking for professional / industry bodies or in industry specific magazines or websites.

When going to such an event you need to be prepared to step out of your comfort zone.

Tips for business conversations:

- Be polite and professional
- Show an interest in the person you are talking to
- Give the speaker feedback
- Use appropriate body language like a smile or a nod
- Never interrupt while the speaker is talking
- Be humble and approachable at all times
- Be friendly and kind
- Remember people's names





## **Volunteer**

One of the best ways to network successfully is to offer something of yourself for free.

Many people have made great contacts by volunteering. Do research on all the organisations in your area. Find a place where you will gain the maximum amount of exposure. Be sure to choose an industry which is related to your own or that the organisation is in some way relevant to your goals. Look at all the non-profit groups in your area.

## **Keep your contacts**

The success of networking depends on the quality of your contacts rather than the quantity.

Once you have identified people you believe you should know, do your research – do they have hobbies, enjoy a particular sport or did they go to the same school as you? Write down a list of topics to discuss with them and always be prepared. Once you have entered a room of people, be sure to move through it quickly. You do not want to miss out and spend too long on speaking to one contact. If you find someone who you would really like to talk to, get their contact details and set up a meeting for another time. Have business cards to hand out.

Remember that networking is about much more than simply making new connections.

You also have to look after existing connections. It is important to nurture both new and old contacts.



## Online networking

It is important to stay on top of the trends in online job searching and to adjust your techniques accordingly. Online networks and social sites are becoming more and more popular as a means to find jobs. Learn to use all the networking resources available to you on the internet:

### □ Facebook

This social network is a great tool for promoting yourself by making informed comments and by posting interesting and relevant news articles. Recent changes, such as Facebook allocating more space for work and education information on personal profiles, make it clear that the social network is becoming a more professional and career oriented service.

Employers have been checking applicants on Google and Facebook for years before scheduling meetings and interviews, so it is always a good idea to have your professional information available on Facebook to showcase your talents.

Companies have started using Facebook as a word-of-mouth tool to advertise vacancies. It is much cheaper than placing job ads and companies assume that their employees may know people worth knowing. It is a good idea to keep in contact with old co-workers, since you never know when one of their employers may be looking for new employees.

If you do make use of Facebook as a professional tool, use an appropriate profile picture and remember to keep the rest of your profile clean and professional looking. Or even better, set your Facebook account up to keep friends and business contacts separate. Facebook has evolved a lot and it is becoming easier to split your work and social lives. Manage your Facebook profile by creating lists. Put contacts on various lists and decide what you want to share with which lists. In this way you can restrict certain people from seeing your private posts.

Join Facebook groups. Groups allow users with similar interests to connect and network with each other. To find groups that will benefit your network, think of topics that allow you to connect with other professionals, and will gain you insight into your industry or your specific skill set. You can search on Facebook and Google for groups or look at friends and co-worker's profiles whose business values you respect and see which groups they belong to.



## □ **Twitter**

Twitter is one of the easiest social media platforms to network on, since it is all about linking to people who have the same interests as you. You do not need to know contacts personally to follow them. Remember to keep your eye on the ratio between your following and your followers. People are more likely to follow someone who is following fewer people than they have followers. Only follow people that can be useful to you.

Remember Twitter is a sharing medium, so it is important to share good, useful content. Share things that are worthwhile and of interest and build your reputation that way. Pick people to follow who you are able to interact with, because that is essential to the networking process. You need to build real workable networks and opportunities.

## □ **Google+**

Google+ (Google Plus) is fast becoming a useful tool to promote your brand. It is great for networking, since it will expose you to people who are not necessarily your friends, but are interested in the same things you are. The best place to start on Google+ is with your profile. Make sure you upload an image, include a good headline and your professional information. Link your profile to your blog, website and other social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Flickr.

The key feature of Google+ is Circles, which allows you to categorise your contacts. Google's Circles are similar to Facebook lists. You can choose who you want to put in which circle. Here you can separate your acquaintances, friends, family and professional contacts into separate circles.

One of the benefits of Google+ is that it allows you to be found in Google searches, and you can have a profile that showcases your information, the content you share and links to your work, blog and website. Circles also allow you to choose which parts of your profile are visible on a Google search and which parts are only visible to your friends and family.





## □ LinkedIn

This professional online network is specifically aimed at introducing potential employees and employers. You can upload a comprehensive profile onto LinkedIn that acts like a CV, and with 450 million users across the world it is changing how people search for jobs.

There are more than 3.8 million LinkedIn users in South Africa and the numbers are growing as the platform is gaining popularity.

First you need to choose a profile picture that will make an excellent impression.

Choose a professional head and shoulders photo or an image of your logo if you have one.

Make sure your LinkedIn profile is complete. A profile that is 100% percent complete is likely to rank better when being searched than others. Users search LinkedIn by way of keywords.

This means you need to use relevant keywords in the headline, job description and the summary on your profile page. Your headline should be a few sentences stating who you are professionally. It should showcase your best professional attributes. Always make sure that your profile is accurate, up to date and that it includes a concrete list of your achievements. Highlight your special skills and qualifications.

Use LinkedIn to keep track of all the people you know. While there may not be an opportunity to work together now, the situation may change in future. You can connect with the following people on your profile: business contacts, co-workers, Twitter followers, contacts in your email address book, friends and family and people you get to know through LinkedIn groups. Joining groups is a great way to grow your network. Choose groups that fit your interests and have active participants. Once you have joined or been accepted to a group, introduce yourself and begin interacting with the other users. Stay active by sharing links, commenting, and asking questions.



## Create an excellent CV

A Curriculum Vitae, or CV, is an outline of a person's education and work experience. This document is prepared for job applications. It is also known as a résumé.

A CV conveys your personal details in the way that presents you in the best possible light. This document is one of the tools you have available to you to market yourself. It is used to sell your skills, abilities and experience to potential employers.

Some of the main things potential employers look at in CVs are:

- Previous related work experience
- Your education and qualifications
- Accomplishments and skills
- Whether or not the document is easy to read
- Whether or not your spelling and grammar are accurate.

There are various types of CVs. It is always good to have a summarised CV (2 – 3 pages) and a full, detailed CV.

### What information should your CV contain?

#### Personal Information

Your personal information includes your full name and surname, ID number / birthday, contact details and any other personal information that is relevant. For example, whether you have a driver's license or your own car, how many dependants you have, what languages you speak and how fluent you are.

A new trend is including your personal mission statement.

This is basically a short paragraph explaining the type of person you are and what you are looking for in your professional life.

**Tip:** Avoid adding details that are not relevant to a professional environment, such as your children's names and your religion.



## Education and qualifications

Here you need to list your education history and qualifications, starting with school, moving up to your highest tertiary qualifications. After that you can list any short courses or seminars that you have attended. Remember to include the name of the institution that awarded you the qualification, the year in which it was obtained and the duration of your studies towards that qualification.

**Tip:** Remember to think through the eyes of your potential employer and make your CV as easy as possible to read. Employers will often discard CVs that are difficult to read.

## Work experience

This is one of the most important sections of your CV and the one the potential employer will focus on. List your employment history, starting with the most recent and working back.

For each position state the following:

- Company name
- Your position (as stated on your job description)
- Period of employment (start and finish date)
- Duties and responsibilities (for more recent jobs go into more detail, the further back the less detail you can include)
- Highlight special achievements during your time there if it is relevant to the position you are applying for.
- Reason for leaving (Never list something negative about the company you worked for, (always keep it professional))

## Other skills or accomplishments

List any other skills or accomplishments you deem relevant to the position you are applying for. For example, computer skills or language skills. Including this information can give a more 'rounded' impression to the employer of who you really are.





## Hobbies and Interests

Keep this very short and simple and real. Do not just list reading, listening to music, spending time with my family etc. Only include it if you think it will add value. Rather leave it out than sound dull and uninspiring.

Tip: Remember to think through the eyes of your potential employer and make your CV as easy as possible to read. Employers will often discard CVs that are difficult to read.

## Referees

You can either list three referees or simply state that referees are 'Available on request'. If the job ad requires you to list contactable referees, let the referees know that you are looking for a job and that they may be contacted for a referral.

## Layout

The layout and presentation of your CV speaks volumes about what kind of person you are and the type of employee you will be.

Look at your current CV and ask yourself:

- Is my CV easy to read?
  - Do I have appropriate headings and spacing; are the different sections clearly defined?
  - Does it reflect my skill level in the computer program that I am using?
  - Does it reflect my personal brand and how I would like to be perceived?
  - Is it a mess?
- 
- Choose an appropriate font that is easy to read. No curly fonts and no 'playful' fonts like Comic Sans, since it does not reflect a professional image. Stick to classic fonts like Times New Roman, Georgia, Arial, Verdana or Calibri. Stick to ONE font. Differentiate sections by using a slightly bigger font or bold.
  - Pay attention to the general layout – heading and subheadings, line spacing and flow is very important. Stay consistent with what you are using.



**Tip:** The University of Kent says that although many people use 12 points on their CVs, some research on the subject suggested that a smaller point size (within reason) on a CV was perceived as more intellectual. :

## **Check, check and check again**

No matter how many times you have read through your CV remember to always read through it again before sending it off. Check for grammar, language and formatting errors. You may spot something that is not relevant to the particular position you are interested in and it will give you the opportunity to take out any clutter. Ask someone else, like a family member or friend, to read it as well before sending it off. Often, we do not pick up mistakes in our own writing because we know what we want to say, so read it asking yourself whether somebody else will understand it.

According to The University of Kent 56% of employers found that spelling and grammar mistakes were the most common errors to occur on CVs. Keep this in mind when writing both your CV and covering letter and make sure you proofread it and get a family member or friend to double check it for you again.

- Check for spelling and grammar mistakes
- Read the job ad carefully and make sure the CV is tailored to the position you are applying for
- Keep your CV within the 2 page range
- Or keep it within the length the employer requested
- Use bullets to make your CV more readable





## Apply for positions with a great covering letter

Now that you have found the job you want to apply for, and you have your CV ready it is time to apply.

The last step is to write a great covering letter (also referred to as a cover letter). This is the most important part of the job application. Alison Griswold writes on the Business Insider website that the cover letter is no longer about listing your own accomplishments, but rather about explaining how your skill set can benefit the company. Employers are looking for employees who are going to benefit their company. Griswold gives the following tips:

- Keep your cover letter short enough to read within 10 seconds.
- The perfect length? 3 paragraphs – the introductions, the meat, and the ending.
- Hook the reader with the first sentence. Make it stand out, but keep it professional.
- Pick two or three skills from your CV and show that you have them. Tailor it to the specific job you are applying for. Give concrete examples of how you use these skills and back it up with numbers if you can.
- Don't just summarise your CV in your cover letter, if your cover letter is good enough, they will read all about it in your CV when they open it.
- Don't start it with 'To whom it may concern', address your letter to the HR manager or specific recruiter. If a name is not stated on the job ad, it only takes a google search or a phone call to find out who the person is.
- Customise your letter to the company culture. The job ad will give you some clues as to the company culture, but be careful not to be too informal.
- Read it, read it again, read it again and get someone else to also read it. You do not want to blow your chances because of a silly mistake.

(You can read the full article by following this link:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/the-new-rules-of-the-modern-cover-letter-2013-10>)

### Remember:

Last but not least, attach your CV and any other documents that the job ad specified. You don't want to blow it right at the end by not attaching your CV.



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