How to Create a Global Resume/CV

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Interest among both new and seasoned professionals in pursuing international careers has skyrocketed in recent years. Such interest has been enhanced by chronic personnel shortages in home markets that are causing companies to actively search beyond their borders for talent.

Professionals of all ages are pro-actively seeking career experiences outside their home countries for a variety of professional and personal reasons --- the need to recharge their batteries with a new challenge, the opportunity to have a position with more responsibility that encourages creativity and initiative (and typically involves a promotion to boot!), the wish to expose their children to another culture and the opportunity to learn a second language, and the recognition that many of those who have "climbed to the top" of the corporate ladder have leap-frogged ahead after a global work experience.

Resume/CV guidelines are in a constant state of change. There are no hard-and-fast rules that are 100% appropriate in every case. Best advice: do your homework - find out what is appropriate vis-a-vis the corporate culture, the country culture, and the culture of the person making the hiring decision. The challenge will be to incorporate several different cultures into one document.

Some general advice:

- The terms "resume" and "CV" (curriculum vitae) *generally* mean the same thing the world-over, i.e., a document describing one's educational and professional experience that is prepared for job-hunting purposes. When there is a difference, a CV is typically a lengthier version of a resume, complete with numerous attachments. **Note:** The *average* length for a resume or CV is two pages - no matter the country, no matter the position. Never ever try to "get around the rules" by shrinking your font size to an unreadable level or printing your resume on the front and back sides of one piece of paper. Neither is an acceptable technique under any circumstance. Never "stretch" your resume to two pages but also never "sell yourself short" by limiting yourself to one page.

- Different countries use different terms to describe the specific aspects of what a resume/CV should contain. For example, "cover letters" are called "letters of interest" in some countries and "motivation letters" in others. Another example photographs are not appropriate to be attached to resumes in the United States; and if one is attached anyway, the employer is required to dispose of it. In many countries outside the US, it is standard procedure to

attach a photo or have your photo printed on your CV. Also, some countries require original copies of transcripts and references to be attached to your application.

- Education requirements differ country to country. In almost every case of "cross-border" job hunting, merely stating the title of your degree would not necessarily be an adequate description. The reader still might not have a clear understanding of what topics you studied or for how many years (i.e., in some countries, a university degree can be obtained in three years and in other countries it takes five years to receive a degree). If you are a recent graduate, and depending heavily on your educational background to get a job, provide the reader with details about your studies and any related projects/experience. The same advice is true for seasoned professionals who have participated in numerous training or continuous education courses --- provide the reader with specific information on what you learned, the number of course hours, etc. **Note:** The general rule is that your university training strictly becomes "a line item" on your resume (i.e., no further details needed) once you have five or more years of professional experience.

- If you have specific training, education or expertise, use industry-accepted terminology in your description. Use language and terms that any professional in your field would understand, no matter where in the world he/she lives.

- Pay particular attention whether to write your resume in chronological or reverse-chronological order. Chronological order means: start by listing your first or "oldest" work experience. Reverse-chronological order means: start by listing your current or most recent experience first. Most countries have definite preferences about which format is most acceptable. If there are no specific guidelines given, the *general* preference is that a resume/CV be written in a reverse-chronological format.

- The level of computer technology and accessibility to the Internet varies widely country to country. Even if a company or individual lists an e-mail address, there is no guarantee that they actually received your mail. Always make sure to e-mail your resume as an attachment and in a widely accepted format, such as "Word." I would always recommend sending a hard copy of your resume/CV via "snail mail" just to make sure that it is received.

- Computer skills and language skills are always important, no matter the job, no matter the country. Take care to describe your skill levels in detail in both categories.

- If you are submitting your resume in English, find out if the recipient uses "British" English or "American" English. There are numerous variations between the two versions. A reader who is unfamiliar with the variations just

presumes that the resume contains typos. Most European companies use "British" English though most United States companies - *no matter where they are based in the world* - use "American" English. Almost every computer today provides you with both options.

- Spellcheck, spellcheck, spellcheck, then get a human being to spellcheck your resume/CV. Incorrectly spelled words or typos are frowned upon by human resource professionals the world over. The presumption is that if you submit a sloppy, careless resume, you will be a sloppy, careless worker. A human "spellchecker" is especially valuable for catching words that are spelled properly but are used incorrectly. The same is true for taking the time to double-check the correct title, gender and spelling of the name of the recipient of your resume. In the United States, "Jan" is a woman's name though it is a man's name in Europe.

- If you can, get someone who is a native speaker of the language in which your resume/CV is written to review your document. Resumes/CV's written by non-native language speakers tend to include terms, though correct in the exact translation, are never used on an every day basis. For example, several foreign resumes/CVs submitted to US employers describe university/college education as "tertiary" education. Although "tertiary" is literally correct, it is a term that is almost never used in the United States. One goal of your resume/CV is to show your familiarity with the culture by using culturally-appropriate language. Anything else just highlights that you may not be a candidate who can "hit the ground running."

- Be aware that stationary or paper sizes are different dimensions in different countries. The United States standard is 8½ x 11 inches whereas the European A-4 standard is 210 x 297 mm. When you are transmitting your resume/CV via e-mail, go to "page setup" on your computer and reformat your document to the recipient's standard. Otherwise, when they print it out on their end, half of your material will be missing! The same is true for sending a fax. If you transmit material typed on "irregular" size paper, half of it will be missing on the other end. If at all possible, purchase stationery that has the same dimensions as the recipient's and mail/fax your resume on that stationery.

- Most multinational companies will expect you to speak both the language of that country and English, which is widely accepted today as being the universal language of business. Have your resume/CV drafted in both languages and be prepared for your interview to be conducted in both languages. Most companies want to "see" and "hear" actual proof of your language skills early in the hiring process.

- The safest way to ensure that your document is "culturally correct" is to review as many examples as possible. Ask the employer or recruiter for examples of resumes that they thought were particularly good.

- Work permit and visa regulations appear very similar country-to-country. In very general terms, most employers who want to hire "foreigners," "aliens" or "expatriates" must be able to certify to the government that they were unable to find locals with the required skill sets. The fastest way to be hired abroad is either to actively seek a country where there is a shortage of people with your skills (IT backgrounds are pretty "hot" everywhere) or to be an "intra-company" transfer from another country. Be aware that obtaining a work permit can take many, many months.

- Lastly, to be successful and enjoy your experience abroad, you must be flexible and open-minded, both eager and willing to learn new ways of doing things. You must be willing to "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." To hold fast to your own cultural traditions even when they offend another or render you ineffective is a waste of everyone's time. People every where appreciate individuals who are at least interested in getting to know them and learn about their ways of doing things. Enormous cultural faux pas are forgiven of pleasant individuals who are making honest attempts to fit in. On the other hand, arrogant know-it-alls can sink million dollar deals just by their boisterous attitudes. Be patient and observant. Ask questions; show your interest in learning and broadening your horizons. Be aware that you represent your country to everyone you meet. You may be the first "Australian" that a "German" has ever met. Both of these individuals will walk away from the initial encounter assuming that all Australians or all Germans are just like you. Representing an entire country is a major responsibility and one that you should be aware of in everything you say and do.

So, go out and give the world a twirl. Here are the tools, the rest is up to you!

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