



Four Easy Ways To Pimp Your CV



A study by US job board **The Ladders** found that you have 6 seconds to make an impact or you land in the "Reject" pile. Recruiters (whether agency or internal) tend to zone in on:

- Name
- Current title and employer
- How long you have been at your current workplace and if you are still there
- Previous positions especially names of firms and longevity
- Admission date / Post qualification experience
- Education - especially for graduates.

Make sure that your CV lets a recruiter access this information readily to increase your chance of scoring an interview. Avoid fancy fonts, logos, photos, text boxes and unnecessary distractions. Tailor your CV to reflect the specified criteria. Note relevant skills or experience and focus on demonstrating achievements in your recent position that match the role requirements.

Here are 4 easy wins to improve your CV:

1. **Employment History**- List your work history in reverse chronological order and clearly state if you are still working. I suggest something simple as follows:

Dec 2014- Current x Law Firm, Melbourne CBD
Senior Associate

Duties included

(say 5-10 bullet points that are relevant to the position you are applying to)

Achievements

(say 3-5 bullet points that highlight why you deserve an interview)

2. **Keep it professional** - Even if you look like George Clooney or Scarlett Johansson - a photo on a legal CV is never appropriate. Keep language formal and use the first person. Ask someone to read over it before sending out – it's amazing how others can find typos that you may have missed. Don't be afraid to let some of your personality shine eg list your hobbies and interests.
3. **Make it relevant** – Can your CV be read in 2 minutes or less? Would a total stranger understand what value you brought to each role, your strengths and your achievements? In terms of length, aim for 2 pages for a junior lawyer and up to 4 pages for a more senior lawyer. Provide more detail on more recent roles, if you have 10 years PQE we don't need much about your pre-legal work at Bunnings. Mention it of course but prioritise the more relevant recent legal positions. If you have achieved in areas eg sport, music, public speaking, academia- make sure you highlight these.
4. **Explain any absences or short stints and don't embellish** – Red flags pop up for unexplained gaps or lots of roles in a short period. There may be valid explanations eg contract roles, firm mergers, following a partner on a lateral move, caring for family members. You are better to explain these on your CV rather than allowing employers to arrive at their own conclusions and prematurely rule you out. Whatever you do, do not lie. Not only does it damage your credibility with your prospective employer, it may affect your overall reputation with future employers.

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