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A couple dozen recommendations on what to add and not to add to your CV.

Some of the things that you, as any other person working in IT, should be professional at is coding and using your head. But the ability to sell yourself (and your skills in particular) is also highly important.

Your CV is your calling card. A good one might help you overcome such an obstacle as a recruitment consultant or an in-house HR specialist, even though this obstacle is just one of many more others.

July 2018 we launched the CV review service for developers. We collected dozens of CVs that needed review and, after some time, closed the curtains, turned on the airplane mode on our phones, made 10 liters of coffee and started to examine each CV. The ones responsible for the check were Kirill Shirinkin and Leonid Suschev, the mkdev co-founders, as well as an experienced recruitment consultant from one of the world's biggest recruitment agencies. We combined our skills in IT and

design with the recruitment experience, which allowed us to investigate all the aspects of every CV.

We got almost zero perfect CVs, but it wasn't a surprise. All of them had mistakes reasonable enough for a recruitment consultant to close the CV and never open it again. In this report we're going to share with you all the mistakes you may make, from the most serious ones to the smallest but very important details. And we'll also tell you how to do everything properly.

An array of 19 CV mistakes

1. No photo

A photo makes any CV better; it gives it a personal feel. Thus, the applicant and the reader get closer to each other. But not every photo works fine for a CV.

Don't:

- Leave the space for the photo blank;
- Attach a horrendous mirror selfie done in an elevator;
- Attach group photos;
- Attach the photos which are too dark or where the face is unrecognizable.

Do:

- Attach a photo with a neutral background and face expression, made by a professional. Spending your time and money on a photoshoot entirely for this reason would be a perfect idea.

2. No date of birth

It's better to put your date of birth in most cases. The exempts are the ones who can be subjects to age discrimination. For example, if you're 16 and have been working as a programmer for 8 years already, the date of birth on a CV might do bad for you.

Don't:

- Add your date of birth if you reasonably think that it might do you bad.

Do:

- Add your date of birth in other cases.

3. Really long list of skills

It's tough to screw up the part where you mention your skills, but some manage to do that, anyway. Here you just need to make a comma-separated list of what you've worked with. Ideally, the skills you've mentioned should be a verification that you are able to do the job you apply for. For example, if you want to work as a Java developer, you'd better specify that you know Java and put this info in the very beginning of the document.

Don't:

- Make this part huge, taking up the whole page with lots of unnecessary info inside of a table;

- Give too much info about the experience you've had with some specific language and pay too much attention to its importance;
- Mention the skills irrelevant for the position or the ones which don't show your expertise;
- Mention such irrelevant things like you being a hard worker and stress resistant.

Do:

- List all the technologies you've worked with and the skills you have;
- Submit the technologies using the wording the developing companies do (e.g. Ruby on Rails instead of ruby-on-rails, Adobe Photoshop instead of Photoshop etc.)

4. Outdated CV

You should always make sure that your CV is up-to-date and remember to change it when needed, especially when it comes to 'Work Experience' part. Don't forget to always add new projects, skills, certificates etc.

Don't:

- Prepare a CV once, forget about updating and send it as is.

Do:

- Keep it up-to-date; always provide changes right away, even if you're not looking for a job at this moment.

5. Provided salary expectations

Providing salary expectations might be helpful only if you know for sure how much you want to earn. This exact amount, no more and no less. But odds are that your expectations might be too low. This is likely to happen if you're not really experienced yet and you want to work as a Junior developer. If you feel fine about $40,000 a year, the company will pay no more than that even if they can afford to pay $60,000, $80,000 or even more.

Don't:

- Mention a tiny expected salary if you're underqualified. What if the company is ready to pay you more?
- Mention the average market salary if you're experienced and a good specialist. Keep options open.

Do:

- Think hard about why you actually provide the salary expectations in your CV. May it be better to delete it?

6. Scarce information about the work experience and completed tasks

One of the most important parts of the CV (and maybe the most important) is 'Work Experience'. There you need to write your previous workplaces or projects and this part becomes rather problematic for most candidates. One of the problems is inadequacy of the wording describing the solved tasks.

Don't:

- Give too much information, e.g. the exact amount of the months you worked in the company, the amount of people in the team or the detailed description of what the company does;

- Share personal stories and memories such as 'We wanted to implement React, but Joe said that Angular.js is better, I didn't agree with him, but we implemented Angular.js anyway since we had no choice' ;
- Summarize the solved tasks into the phrases like 'Fixed the bags' which mean absolutely nothing ;
- Leave this part blank.

Do:

- Write a list of the tasks solved on the project. This part should be neither too big nor too small and you shouldn't use the first-person pronouns. For example: 'Implementing credit card payment system in compliance with PCI DSS'.

7. Cover letter in the CV main text

Sometimes it's worth writing a cover letter to add it to your CV, but it should be written in concordance with the position you apply for and the company you send it to. But, anyway, the main text of the CV is not suitable for that purpose, so avoid adding your autobiography or flatteries like 'I've wanted to be a programmer and build a brighter future with this company since I were a child'. We often come across things like that in a personal profile part.

Don't:

- Attach your cover letter to the CV.

Do:

- Write cover letters aimed at a particular company and send it separately from the CV (as a separate file or in the body of the email.)

8. No contact info and location

The recruitment consultant needs to know where you are and how to contact you.

Don't:

- Hide any info about yourself.

Do:

- Add your email, phone number and city to the part with your name, photo and birth date. Don't forget to specify if you're willing to relocate or not.

9. Wrong order of the CV parts

The recruitment consultant usually has some expectations about the CV structure so you'd better match them. This is how the parts should be organized:

1. Name, age, contact info;
2. Position you apply for;
3. Comma-separated list of key skills;
4. Work experience in reverse chronological order (the current project at the top, the oldest one at the bottom) ;

5. Education;
6. Further education (courses, certifications);
7. Foreign language skills;
8. (Optional) Additional info (hobbies, marital status, smoking etc.)

Don't:

- Create your own CV structure;
- Copy the information from one part to the other and thus, duplicate it. For example, copy the work experience info to the 'Skills' part.

Do:

- Follow the structure above that the recruitment consultant expects.

10. No work experience in CV

Most of the amateur programmers have CVs of a couple of lines. The ones who change the field do have experience, but it's irrelevant to programming. You can't alter the situation by changing several sentences in the CV, only by working hard.

The options are limitless. You can create an app for your own purposes, prototype it and send to GitHub or even host it somewhere, Heroku, for instance. You can also commit to some open source projects or libraries. You might as well find a Senior developer who's ready to share his or her experience with you in exchange for the help with the project. Then, you can add this work to your CV. Whatever you chose, you need to add experience working on real projects before applying for a Junior programmer.

Don't:

- Send the CV without any programming experience mentioned.

Do:

- Actively collect all the relevant work experience and add it to the CV.

11. CV squeezed onto one page

Rumor has it that the CV should be one- or two-page long. Keeping that in mind, some people try to do whatever they can to fit all the necessary information on that space. Some minimize the text or write several long paragraphs of text without any formatting. Some just skip a bunch of important info, add a link to the personal website and hope that the recruitment consultant will visit it. Others write the text in two columns.

The truth is that there's nothing wrong with a three-, four- or even five-page long CVs, but this space should be used properly. The title shouldn't take up half of the space on the page and your CV shouldn't contain a longread of your complete autobiography from the year of birth to 2019. If your truly have a lot of experience and you solved many challenging tasks on different projects, don't worry about the amount of pages. It might be impossible to fit the vast experience of 10 or more years on one page only, after all.

Don't:

- Squeeze your CV onto one or two pages without any paragraphs, using 8pt font size;
- Make a huge, long CV, 90% of which is highly-detailed unnecessary info about what kind of yogurt you used to eat when you were a child.

Do:

- Fill all the parts with relevant information, without any unnecessary details;
- Not worry about the fact the CV with the relevant information took up three, four or more pages. You should be proud of such a CV.

12. No foreign language skills

Many forget to mention their language skills.

Don't:

- Hide the info about the languages you know.

Do:

- Mention all the foreign languages you know at the end of the CV without your mother tongue. Write your mother tongue as a separate line.

13. Too bright or poorly formatted CV

Everybody thinks of themselves as designers nowadays, so they want to show their skills in design. They use dozens of different fonts as well as colors, split the text into columns or sometimes even tiles. We make such mistakes as we use the 'designer's' templates we've found in Google.

Don't:

- Experiment with the design trying to make your CV look like an honorary certificate.

Do:

- Use 1-2 font types, 1-2 colors and a boring linear text structure (e.g. like in this report.)

14. No desired position

If have little experience and your CV has only a line like 'Worked as a shop assistant', you should mention what position you want to apply for. For example, you can write that you want to be a Junior frontend developer at the beginning of your CV (see item 9).

It can be also helpful for those with lots of different experience (see item 18 for more). The recruitment consultant doesn't want to guess what exactly you want to do while reading your CV. He or she should be able to realize right away what your desired position is and then make sure that your skills and experience are relevant for that position.

If you find several vacant positions interesting, you need to make a tailored CV for each one and mention the names of the positions in them. Remember that described skills and experience should be always relevant to the position.

Don't:

- Forget to mention the desired position, especially when the experience for it is limited or nonexistent.

Do:

- Mention the desired position at the beginning of the CV and write the skills and experience proving that you're suitable for it.

15. Bad attempts to write a CV in English

It's necessary to duplicate your CV in English if your work in IT, but it should be a proper CV, not something translated with Google Translate.

Don't:

- Translate your CV yourself if your English skills are insufficient.

Do:

- Make sure that the CV is translated correctly by sending it to a specialist for proofreading or asking a translator for professional help.

16. Spelling errors and other mistakes

Well, we shouldn't explain this much. You need to either examine the text carefully or ask your friends with better language skills to proofread. The mistakes are unacceptable. Besides spelling and punctuation, many create lists wrong, meaning they misuse full stops, commas and semicolons.

Don't:

- Scribble the shitty text of bad quality and leave it at that.

Do:

- Eradicate any punctuation, grammar and spelling errors from your CV.

17. Misuse of technology names

The least you should know about the technologies is how to spell their names.

Don't:

- Translate technology names into your mother tongue;
- Randomly spell the names.

Do:

- Google how to spell any particular technology and use the official variant. github => GitHub, ios => iOS, rails => Ruby on Rails etc.

18. Not aimed CV

It might be that you have a bunch of different work experience. You used to work with Ruby, Go, and also were a QA-engineer and even a system administrator.

In this case it might be wrong to mention all the experience you have in the CV and put a detailed description of all that. The experience connected with IT is always good, but remember what job you want to have in the future. If your aim is to be a Ruby developer, focus on the experience connected with Ruby and minimize all other parts.

Don't:

- Give a highly detailed description of all your work life.

Do:

- Write the brief summary about the least important projects, and focus on the experience and skills you want to continue to use in the future.

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19. Randomly chosen CV file format

You should always send your CV as a PDF. The magic of this format is that it looks the same everywhere the file's opened, be it any operational system or a mobile device.

The formatting of .doc or .rtf files will be screwed up on the screens of Linux and MacOS users. And, indeed, the CV written using Libre Office will not look good for those who use Windows.

There are some recruitment consultants who ask for a CV as a Word file. Don't listen to them, they don't know what they really want. You can send a PDF. We've done this before and got no complaints.

Don't:

- Use docx, rtf, txt and other file formats.

Do:

- Use PDF only.

Your next steps

We're sure that after reading this report you have an urge to rewrite your CV completely. Then do it!

Besides your CV, you always need to update your LinkedIn profile. If, for example, you plan to work in German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) it might be a good idea to create a profile on Xing.

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In general, if there is a website you can have a profile on, you should do that. You can do that on, for example https://angel.co/, https://www.honeypot.io/ and others.

If you update your CV, it should be shown at your LinkedIn profile and other profiles you might have. It might seem really long and boring, but in truth it takes about 10-15 minutes before and after you change project.

We hope that these recommendations will prove useful to you and help you find an awesome job or project.

We plan to help our students with the job search in the future, so if you've ever studied or plan to study at mkdev, open the account edit section, tick that you look for a job and attach your new CV.