



## Buyers Guide: Selecting a professional CV writer

As a job candidate, you have a range of people available to help you write a CV. Like any service, whether its an accountant, doctor or hairdresser, it can be difficult to objectively compare vendors because you don't get to see the results until after you have committed.

Before selecting a service, you need to ask yourself a few questions...

### **Do you just need someone to type up and proof read text you have already written yourself?**

In this case you can be satisfied with a word processing service, and this is likely to be less than \$150.

**Do you need someone to write your CV from scratch, or substantially rewrite your existing CV?** This writer will need to gather information from you first. Prices are likely to vary according to your working experience. Writing a CV for someone with only a few years experience takes less time than for someone with decades of experience that needs to be focused into a few pages. This service may start at \$150 and go up to \$500.

**Are you looking for a complete career makeover, with counselling on careers that suit you?** Would you benefit from interview training? A new CV is often part of this review. Prices vary widely, depending on the services within the package.

This article suggests fourteen criteria you can use to select a CV writer that's suitable for you.

### **1. Business experience**

Does the writer have relevant business experience? Have they been in a job where they were responsible for real results or do they have an HR or administration background? HR and admin people understand the **process** of recruitment but it takes a line manager to know how to impress the real decision maker. Ask the CV writer the most senior role they have held. Ask how many staff they have hired and managed.

### **2. Marketing experience**

Does the writer understand benefits and differentiation? Your CV has to sell you, so a writer who is happy just to type up a "shopping list" of your job titles, responsibilities and education will sell you very short. Give the writer a brief description of your background and ask them what they think your USP should be\*. Ask if they have ever had a selling job.

### **3. Writing experience**

Find out how many years they have been writing CVs. Also ask how long they have been writing *persuasive* business communications? Someone with advertising copywriting experience has much more relevant experience than someone writing reports or academic papers. Your CV is primarily a selling document to per-

suade an employer or recruiter to invite you for interview.

#### 4. Track record

How many years has their company been in the CV business? What experience do they have in writing CVs for people in your field? Is the writer a member of any professional associations that may indicate reputation or industry standing?

#### 5. Information gathering process

How much effort will the writer make to understand your background, skills and strengths? Will your strengths be apparent if they intend gathering this information by looking at your existing CV or having you fill in forms online? Will they rewrite what you give them or will they interview you in person, asking specific questions? Will that interview be over the phone or will they meet you in person (obviously a much more complete research process)?

#### 6. Personal service

Does the writer provide their professional background on their website or are they anonymous? If the writer is unwilling to disclose their name and details, how reliable are they?

#### 7. Testimonials and references

As well as testimonials on their website, can the writer provide you names of clients willing to speak to you about their experiences?

#### 8. Language ability

A CV writer needs a wide vocabulary, and skill at presenting complex ideas clearly and succinctly. Being a native English speaker is not enough to be a good writer. Check their company's home page for spelling and grammar errors.

#### 9. Quality control

Does the writer have self and peer review quality control processes in place? How do they ensure the CVs they prepare are what recruiters and employers want to see? Do they actively seek recruiter and employer feedback?

#### 10. Code of Ethics and privacy

Does the writer have a formal Code of Ethics? Of course, a writer isn't unethical (for example, passing your personal information to mailing list companies, making false statements about themselves or you) for not having this spelled out but it does indicate how professional they are.

Ask the writer's policy on protecting your personal information. Or simply ask if they own a shredder (they need one to adequately dispose of personal data).

#### 11. Understanding recruitment technology

Ask about recruiters' CV scanning processes and database search software. If the writer does not understand the issues with modern machine readable CVs, yours may not show up when recruiters are looking for someone just like you.

#### 12. Drafts

Do you get to review a draft version of your CV or do you have to accept what they give you?

#### 13. Guarantees

What warranties does the writer provide? Are they prepared to modify your CV if you get a negative response from a recruiter or employer?

Are any guarantees realistic? Be suspicious if the writer offers guaranteed job interviews. Without doubt, a great CV helps you get an interview but you still need the experience and qualifications required. Because this is outside the CV writer's control, most guarantees come with conditions regarding the number of applications you need to send out. Are there 10 jobs per month in your field? Alternatively, the writer might be in league with a recruiter who brings you in for one interview but without a real job.

#### 14. Price

Ask what you get for the price. Do you get personal service or is it all via email? Does it include a cover letter or other services? How long does the process take? Are there extra charges for an electronic version you can edit yourself in future, or for printouts and binding? Is there a cover page? How many copies do you get?

Does the price include GST? Do you have to pay upfront? What payment methods are available?

**By asking questions about these fourteen criteria, you will be clear about the nature of the CV writing service offered, and can better judge the price and value.**

\* USP means Unique Selling Point

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