

Unlucky 13 - 13 reasons why I binned your CV

I've got the 20 short-listed applicants in order to select the 12 I'm going to interview for the 2 vacant posts available. I started with 114 applications. Why did I bin your CV?

1. **Poor presentation.** It looked scruffy - the corners were turned up and it looked as if it had travelled across several other desks before it got to mine. It had a coffee mark on one page. If you cannot be bothered to print me a fresh clean copy then you are not the sort of person I want.
2. **Not tailored to the job.** The date on the CV or covering letter was August 2003. It's now November. You talk about wanting to work for a biotech company but I'm actually a research institute. If you can't be bothered to update your CV and tailor it to each application you're not the employee for me.
3. **Poorly Formatted.** It looks untidy and is poorly formatted and unbalanced. Large areas of white space occur between parts which are very crowded. It is not clearly separated into sections covering different aspects of what is included. There are spelling mistakes and inconsistencies. Good presentation is a skill I value and I expect employees to have acquired a reasonable level of this skill already. I also value people who take the time and trouble to get things right. You're not one of these.
4. **Missing Details.** Some essential details are missing at the start. You don't give me a telephone number and your address is incomplete. Will I be able to contact you at all? Bin.
5. **Chronological Gaps.** There is a gap in the chronology of your activities. What happened in 2001-2002? Later in the CV you tell me that you took a gap year in which you worked for part and travelled for the rest and learned lots of useful skills but you went in the bin before I got that far.
6. **Qualification Groupings.** You don't make it clear by providing dates if you took all your educational qualifications in appropriate batches or if you had several attempts at some. This is a worry I can do without. In the bin.
7. **Not current.** You tell me the titles of the modules you took in year 1 and the marks but it's now December in year 2 and you haven't told me the titles of the modules you are doing in year 2. If I don't know what you are committed to by what modules you chose how can I decide if I'm interested? Bin.
8. **Lacking Detail I.** Your work experience details give just employer and date (in months). July - September could be July 30 to Sept 2nd (one month) or July 1st to September 30th (3 months). Very different. You don't tell me if they were part or full time. The term 'Office work' tells me very little. Did you just make the tea? Actually you dealt directly with clients and carried a lot of responsibility but I don't know this. You tell me nothing of the skills you learned or how you developed. Bin.
9. **Lacking Detail II.** In your interests section you tell me you enjoy debating, swimming, travel, going to the gym and going out with friends. I have translated this as follows: you were in a debate at school (3 years ago), you go to the pool when you need a bath and travelled to Benidorm with your parents when you left school. You don't tell me you are treasurer for the University debating Society, swim 3 times a week and are taking a life-saving award and organised a trip for 6 friends to Patagonia. All these indicate real involvement and activity but you missed them out. Bin.

10. **Old Referees.** You have two referees at the end. Both are from School. Has two and a half years at university left you entirely unchanged so their views are still valid? If so, you are not the person I want. Did something happen at University that you don't want me to find out about?
11. **Weak Language.** It is full of 'weak' language like 'participated in' and 'involved with' and 'took part in' which actually tell me very little and make me suspect there is little substance in what you are describing.
12. **Not enough about you.** You tell me very little about YOU! What do you like and enjoy? What information tells me about your personality? Are you a bright, interested, involved and active person? Do you participate well in groups? How do I know this from your CV? I don't. Bin.
13. **Follow instructions.** Your application arrived after the closing date and did not comply with the instructions in the advert. Bin.

You may think I'm being hard but I'm just very busy and want to solve my problem of selecting 20 from 114 as quickly as I can. In fact the 20 I selected are probably no better qualified than you but they spent time and effort on producing a good, tailored and complete CV.

Think on. You could have been interviewed for this post.

Ian Hughes, Centre for Bioscience

Other employability resources and web links available at:

<http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/issues/employability>