

# Want to work at an agency? Send a CV worth reading

Standing out amongst a pile of CVs is often not easy, so how do you make a good first impression with a CV destined for the 'yes' pile?



Palesa Letaba

Palesa Letaba, Talent Officer of Native VML, said: "We go through so many CVs during the job-application process and, sadly, many don't make the grade because of amateur mistakes like poor spelling and the inclusion of irrelevant information. To assist those wanting to make an impression we've compiled a list of dos and don'ts for a successful CV application."

Starting with the Dos list, Letaba says it's important to be different. "You have to understand that HR departments see hundreds of CVs every month and if you don't stand out you're unlikely to be noticed. Graphs, infographics, headlines and a clean, eye-catching layout all add up to a CV that makes our hearts beat a little faster."

Next, she suggests writing an introduction in the email. "Don't just send a CV. If the subject line doesn't tell us what you are interested in, it's unlikely we can help you. If the best you can do is to send your CV with a 'Sent from Blackberry/iPhone/whatever' message, we will struggle to take you seriously."

## Proofread

Spellcheck and a quick proofread is an essential before hitting 'send', added Letaba. She advises getting a friend to read it or read it out loud to see if it makes sense.

"Let the medium be the message. What I mean by that is an application for a finance position and design position should be very different. Let your personality shine through. Don't think of a black-and-white word document as your application. It could be anything, such as a video, blog post, singing telegram etc. Try telling a (short) story, rather than giving a list of jobs, degrees, accolades. While this is the traditional way of doing a CV you need to remember that you are applying at a

creative agency, so traditional isn't necessarily the best route. The best tip I can offer is to make sure that by the end of page three (max) we have picture of you as a person," she said.

Letaba says that when talking about your experience, talk about your accountabilities and achievements rather than your tasks in each role you've had. Put your most recent experience first and make sure the dates are accurate. "If there are overlaps or gaps, tell us why. The days of a career gap counting against you are (mostly) over, but please let us know if you were hiking in Mongolia, saving the rainforests, learning to code or becoming the world Tekken champion in your downtime."

Looking at her list of CV don'ts, Letaba says forwarded emails are a no no. "It's really not advisable to let the company that you are hoping to work for know that it was possibly your second choice by forwarding a CV originally addressed to someone else."

"Also applicants who call and ask: 'When is the closing date for applications?' don't inspire much confidence. It sounds like you are going to wait for the last minute to apply. Apply now if you are interested."

She adds that keeping your CV info relevant is an essential. "We don't really care if you were the under 14B Vice Captain of your netball team."

## **Inappropriate tweets**

"Lastly, if you have totally inappropriate tweets on your Twitter account, don't include your handle on your CV."

Getting around the 'no previous experience' issue can be tricky when applying for any new job, but Letaba believes it can be overcome. "Tell us what you want to do. If you haven't found yourself, pick a direction that sounds exciting and is relevant to our business and be prepared to answer questions about your choice. We won't expect you to know everything, but we would expect a good answer to 'Why does this appeal to you?' Read a few articles and be able to converse, at least basically, about the subject. Tell us why we should pick you over the 300 other people who have applied for the same job.

Show us a varsity project, a piece of proactive work, an idea you have, a blog you write, something! The person who reads your application is interested in finding the very best talent to present to whoever makes the hiring decision. Give him a reason to take the next step in meeting you," she said.

"Working in an agency is challenging but highly rewarding. Agencies are always looking for new talent, enthusiastic personalities and hard workers, so be encouraged. All the best with your applications; may the force of good grammar and articulate persuasion be with you," she concluded.

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