



The CV

Lipstick on a pig & other popular misunderstandings

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In South Africa's competitive job market, presenting a well-written CV is not only sensible, but shrewd.

Employers are increasingly frustrated by poorly written CVs, irritated by irrelevant content, lazy typos and spelling mistakes. These are a few of the things that contribute to missed opportunities.

So what kinds of misunderstandings devalue a CV?

A good CV will get you the job - FALSE

Yes a good CV **is** important – it represents you - it's an introduction that will hopefully lead to an interview. But, if your interview skills don't match the impressive CV content, you won't necessarily get the job.

Having a strong CV but poor interviewing skills is about as helpful as *putting lipstick on a pig*. You need **both**.

CVs aren't as important these days - FALSE

CVs continue to be recruitment currency, whether in soft or hard copy. A well-written, content appropriate CV that is easy to read will win the heart of many a recruiter, providing you with a greater chance of being considered for a role.

Including a photograph on your CV is expected - FALSE

You are applying for a job, not a date.

Unless your appearance is particularly important to the position (such as applying for an acting or modelling role), the focus should be on your skills and experience. Also, including a photograph immediately opens you up to unconscious **bias** based on your appearance – so why go there?

Writing your CV in the 3rd person is clever - FALSE

No. No. And NO. It's just weird. Don't do it.

Avoid tired clichés and self-congratulatory adjectives - TRUE

A CV should be an unpretentious summary of facts. Overselling or hyping yourself will only create doubt about your objectivity.

Deal with the facts, use positive language and include achievements, but avoid blatantly boastful language such as "outstanding", "unparalleled" "inspired", "winning" ... etc.

Triple check for spelling, grammatical errors and typos - TRUE

Your CV is a business document not a WhatsApp message.

A badly written CV is a Red Flag, it can indicate ineptitude, indifference, or at the very least a lack of attention to detail. No employer wants that. If you know this is an area of weakness, ask someone to help you.

Size counts - TRUE

Ideally a CV should be no longer than 2 to 3 pages.

Part of successful CV composition is knowing how to write concisely without leaving out important information. No one has time for lengthy documents these days, so the ability to summarise, as well as prioritise information, is a skill that employers welcome.

Remember, your CV is a summary, not a novel.

Minimise personal information - TRUE

The days of including your marital status, number of children, home address, ID number, date of birth, salary, drivers licence etc. etc. are over. With cybercrime and identity theft on the increase we need to be more circumspect with what we share.

Include contact details such as mobile number and email address, but the rest can be covered during a conversation.