

## Crafting an Executive Summary of your Credentials

How well does your CV introduce you? Do your accomplishments and qualifications shine forth? By definition, your Curriculum Vitae ("course of life") is a comprehensive chronology that you keep up-to-date; so unless you are very young, it will not scan easily. Another limitation is that academic CV formats tend to be fairly fixed; creative license is not encouraged.

A Resume or Synopsis is a shorter, easier-to-scan account of your career and qualifications. But it too is a "general purpose" document; your uniqueness may remain buried.

An "Executive Summary" is a novel form increasingly used in business, especially for job searches. This focused synopsis of your background succinctly emphasizes your achievements and fit with the position under consideration. Decision-makers greatly appreciate being able to "size you up" in a 30-second scan rather than searching through many pages of a CV to extract the information most relevant to their purpose. So, at one or two pages, an Executive Summary can allow you to "stand out."

In contrast to the fixed chronology of a CV, you get to design your "Executive Summary" to best display and highlight your strengths and professional accomplishments. Begin with a statement of your *Career Objective*, eg "a surgical department chair position in a forward-looking academic health center." Next summarize in bullets your particular *Qualifications* (eg, sought after peer-reviewer and speaker on...; extensive and progressively responsible experience as a....).

Next state your specific *Accomplishments*. A good model here is to first state the *Problem* you identified (ie what needed to be fixed, what opportunity and challenges existed) and then the *Actions* you took. Then whenever possible, give details of the *Result or Benefits* you achieved (eg "increased revenues by 30% in 2 years").

In describing your achievements, choose action verbs: eg, *built, led, headed, tested, completed, created, developed, documented, established, evaluated, identified, innovated, organized, systemized, upgraded, constructed*. Also note any expertise in an unusual procedure or administrative area that might be relevant to your Career Objective. Background unrelated to your goals and where you're headed should either be reworded to emphasize transferrable skills or not included.

Finally, list your *positions held/professional experience* and your *education/advanced training*.

Just as with CVs, one-size does *not* fit-all. Let your objective and career history determine the best format and order for your Executive Summary. Remember that one advantage of an Executive Summary is the flexibility to describe your role and contributions to joint projects.

For some purposes (eg queries), your Executive Summary can substitute for your CV; for more formal uses, you will staple it to the front of your CV. From your Executive Summary, if you have not already done so, extract a one or two paragraph biosketch, for use in programs and introductions.

When you have a worthy draft, ask a few of your peers and senior colleagues to critique it. Expect to work through two or more drafts until you arrive at a version which best presents you. As your objectives shift, you'll modify your Executive Summary accordingly. If you're considering alternative career directions, you may prepare more than one version.

Even if you're not currently looking for a new opportunity, no one can predict when one might present itself. If you have an Executive Summary at the ready you'll be better positioned to take advantage of any opportunities that do arise. In today's quickly changing and competitive environment, you can't afford to be without this relatively easy-to-design mode of self-introduction.

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For more detail see: "Converting a CV to a Resume: Use of the Executive Summary" by Judith Katz and Page S. Morahan, *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*, Winter 2001-2, pp 46-53.