

CONVERTING A CV TO AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OR PROSPECTUS

By Page S. Morahan, Ph.D. and Judith Katz, Ed.D.

Among professionals in higher education, medicine and many of the sciences a curriculum vita (CV) is the basic career document sent in response to ads or search committee requests. And you need to have a clear and complete picture of your academic achievements.

- ❖ **Step 1:** review your CV and put it into the best format to both: (1) highlight your accomplishments, and (2) demonstrate ALL you have accomplished. We find many academics forget to include activities such as all the educational sessions you've given, all the educational sessions for the public, etc. (**Note:** Often this CV is NOT the document required internally by institutions to keep their files up to date)

Even an excellent CV, however, is NOT the best document for presenting your overall accomplishments in a **succinct** way. View the CV as a laboratory data book full of raw data. As with raw data, CV data need to be analyzed and discussed for the greatest impact!

- ❖ **Step 2:** prepare an Executive Summary, Resume, or Prospectus. We find the Executive Summary and Prospects particularly useful for academic and scientist leaders. Whatever the format, this is more than a door-opening document. When written thoughtfully it becomes a strategic career planning opportunity.

An Executive Summary, Resume, or Prospectus is sent *accompanying* the more traditional CV. Since any of these shorter forms are still relatively uncommon in academia or science, they provide candidates with a useful edge.

What are the differences among these approaches? In this column we describe the Executive Summary and Prospectus. Basic resume writing can be found in most job search books.

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary provides a focused synopsis of background and achievements relevant to your current career objective. It is particularly useful when applying for leadership positions. Used as an overview to the traditional long academic CV, it provides the decision makers who are likely conceptual thinkers with pertinent bottom line information that can be scanned in 30 seconds. The accompanying CV provides any additional details. Several variations are possible, differing in length, with some having less information in the Experience and Education sections, leaving those details for the CV that follows. Each Executive Summary opens with clearly organized contact information: name, address (es), phone number(s), email and fax numbers. (See the Executive Summary for Susan Boyd.)

Your opening is an **Objective Statement**. In 2-3 lines, the Objective provides:

- A strong statement of the work you wish to do, or position you wish to hold tailored to each position for which you are applying.
- An effective, but brief, statement of top strengths, skills and/or talents you bring.
- Brief summary of results the employer can expect from hiring you (e.g., generally one or more of these Profit improvement; Cost savings; Problem relief; Stress reduction) – in essence, how you can add value to the organization.

The Objective is followed by a **Qualifications Statement**. This allows reader to understand why you feel you are qualified for the work or position your objective claims. Be brief and concise in paragraph form, or a combination of an opening paragraph followed by specific skills or abilities listed in bullet form.

The Qualifications section is supported by the **Achievements or Accomplishments** section. This shows you are an achiever, one who works and contributes beyond the expected job requirements. In priority order (for the position of interest to you), list and describe achievements that highlight your strengths and accomplishments as they relate to your objective. Be strategic in your choice, not exhaustive. For each show:

- What you did that made the experience an achievement.
- Who you did it for.
- How you did it (in action words)
- What results you can point to that will help the reader see you can perform the work or service that your Objective says you will.

Where possible quantify your results, such as percent grant revenues increased or failure rates reduced or money saved. Readers are attracted by and respond to numbers. Because not all accomplishments are quantifiable, you can also present results in qualitative terms to show you have made a difference.

Examples – Accomplishments (see more on Executive Summary sample)

- Founded interdisciplinary Clinical Centers for Women's Health, involving collaboration of four departments for clinical services and billing. Developed business plan; persuaded hospital and departments to join the effort which grew the unit from 4 clinics to 10 clinics per week; increased staff from 2 to 12 within 18 months and increased revenues by 30%.
- Initiated and moderated numerous seminars and product demonstrations for community organizations and clients. Persuaded community leaders to donate time for panel discussion; identified hostile participants and defused conflicting positions; built rapport. *Results:* Open community forum won acclaim, including excellent local newspaper and radio reviews; three out of eight client companies purchased new software packages.
- Developed comprehensive program for delivery of services to students with disabilities. Made services to students with disabilities a priority; engaged groups to design necessary modifications for access. *Results:* enrolled over 600 students with disabilities, more than any other college in the area.
- Founded Office for Faculty Affairs. Engaged broad faculty/administrative group to design, implement and evaluate the first annual faculty professional development and performance appraisal system for the health sciences university. *Results:* Materials still in use seven years later, available on web site, and used as models by other medical schools.
- Researched reasons for a financial paper backlog for two accounting departments in complex healthcare organization. Identified problems; assessed internal capabilities; set goals, planned and implemented procedures to correct the problem, reorganized the two inefficient departments into one. *Results:* Cleared 5000 items and 5-year backlog; reduced staff by 10 employees through natural attrition in less than 15 months; realized savings in excess of \$120,000 annually.

The **Experience** section is next. In reverse chronological order, list position title, institution, location, and dates. In the longer version, amplify each position by describing key functions. Strategically decide whether to emphasize the *institution* or *position* by placing that item on the left. This and the next section are optional in the executive summary because it always accompanies a CV and is found there.

And now finally, the section most academics prefer to begin with, **Education**. Advanced training may be included or separated out into a separate **Advanced Training** section. In reverse chronological order, list formal education and training. There are a few additional sections that might be considered if space permits and they are deemed pertinent for the particular position you are seeking (and might not easily be seen in the CV). These include: Affiliations, Honors/Awards, and Grants. Some advanced training may also be honors.

Prospectus

Another focused and strategic career summary is the **Prospectus**. This includes identifying and contact information, an objective, a qualifications summary, and areas of expertise. It can be viewed as an even more focused Executive Summary, using the very key points you want to emphasize. An education section may be included if there is space. The prospectus is quite targeted – no places of employment or dates are provided. And, most importantly it is **landscape formatted** so as not to be confused with a Resume or CV. (See the sample

Prospectus for Willa Jones.) because of its landscape formatting it is often used as a reminder and included with thank you notes after networking meetings.

Results Using the Executive Summary and Prospectus

Over the past few years since these summaries have been recommended by several who have used them have commented favorably.

“Can’t say enough about the impact of sending a shortened resume with the full CV when responding to an advertisement for a job. Just heard from “XU” and will interview at end of month for the Vice Chancellor of Research. I am still waiting to hear back from “ABU,” where I interviewed a few weeks ago.”

“This has been a really effective tool because it lets the resume ‘do the talking’ for you; something the vita is not designed to do. Please tell all how helpful and right it was to suggest using the resume format.”

Recently a client left this message: “When speaking to a head hunter screening candidates for an academic deanship, I was told that my materials were so wonderful that many of his questions were answered in the material sent to him, which included an executive summary. Another client recently said an executive search firm said his executive summary “made his application stand out.”

This column is an abridged version of Katz and Morahan, Converting a curriculum vita to a resume, Career Planning and Adult Development Journal, 17: 46-55, 2002.

EXAMPLE OF 1-PAGE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (omitting Experience and Education)

Susan Boyd, Ph.D.

**134 Prospect Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53212**

T: Home 414-534-7891 Off. 414-706-1432

E: Susan.Boyd@MCW.edu

Objective

Department chair position, leading and mentoring staff, ensuring departmental goals are met in alignment with college, and supporting strong student relations.

Qualifications

Extensive experience in research management; teaching and mentoring graduate students, fellows, staff, faculty; and academic and scientific disciplinary leadership.

Accomplishments

- *Lead multidisciplinary research group in molecular endocrinology of diabetes.* Over 15 years of continuous research support totaling \$10 million; funded collaborations with clinicians and pharmaceutical industry; patent pending.
 - *Connect/ persuade people to accomplish challenging tasks.* Developed Program Project among three institutions, now in 7th year of funding.
 - *Reorganize working groups for more productivity.* Designed successful, first-ever department retreat; developed new faculty merit review process, now in 3rd year of implementation.
 - *Innovative problem solver.* Re-designed departmental graduate brochure and marketing approach and increased applicants by 35%; increased graduate program funding by dual-adviser role with local pharmaceutical industry; doubled graduate student publication rate through including manuscripts as chapters in Ph.D. dissertations.
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EXAMPLE OF PROSPECTUS (Visualize Landscape Format)

**25 S. Broad Street
Downtown, TN 57482**

WILLA T. JONES
Home: (721) 557-9938 Office:(721) 543-9732
Email: wtjones@aol.com

Objective

Senior position in academic administration utilizing skills where I can make significant contributions utilizing my education, skill set and experience

Profile

Creative, resourceful and detail oriented academic and administrative leader with expertise Providing challenge and support for faculty and students in curricular, research and instructional areas. Settings have included private and public institutions, liberal arts colleges and professional schools

Areas of Expertise

Management

- Budgeting
- Long range planning
- Conflict resolution

Functional

- Faculty development
- Student development
- Learning centers

Accomplishments

- Created Ombudsperson position
- Developed course evaluation
- Established Women's Center

Characteristics

- Visionary
 - Strategic
 - Problem solver
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