

# Senior CV gaffes – and how to avoid them (page one)

You may know all the basics of good CV-writing,  
but that's no cause for complacency.

As Linda Clark explains, even applicants at the highest  
level can make mistakes.

*(MBA BUSINESS, MARCH 2004)*

**A** Steve's 'profile' is too vague. It gives me no understanding as to his functional expertise (marketing, sales, finance?) and indeed we would expect all MBA's to be 'qualified', 'versatile' and 'looking for new opportunities'. Also, it does not tell me anything about his real passion or motivation. Think of your CV as your own personal sales document and find words to use in the profile section to differentiate you from other candidates and to summarise what is really special about you.

**B** The contact details are fine but try to avoid 'amusing' email addresses! It does not convey professionalism.

**C** If you are going to include a section on achievements, the points should refer to things you have actually done in the past. Steve uses active verbs (leading, designing etc.) rather than 'led' and 'designed' and also fails to quantify any of the facts. Employers want to see results on a CV so an improvement could be 'Implemented staff performance appraisal systems which led to an increased retention rate of 20% and a rise in productivity levels of 15%'.

**D** There are some spelling/punctuation points that a SpellCheck will not highlight. A common mistake is the incorrect use of the word 'its' and 'it's'. Make sure you understand when to use which word – if grammar is a weakness of yours, get a friend or colleague to review your text.

**E** Steve's last job ended in July 2003 and he makes no reference to what he has been doing since then. A 'gap' on a CV always raises questions so make sure you avoid this pitfall. If he has been job hunting since then, he should be able to show that he has also been doing some work (consultancy, freelance etc.) It is also perfectly acceptable to say that he has been travelling (and state where); if he was made redundant, it is best to avoid using this word on a CV.

8 Mountain Close  
Hampstead  
London  
NW3 7HN  
Phone: 020 7368 9873  
Mobile: 07789 497287  
E-mail: stevethestud@hotmail.com

**B**

## Steve Sharp

- A Profile** A qualified and versatile Senior Manager with varied experience looking for a new opportunity. Ideally experienced to provide strategic leadership as well as the practical skills to motivate staff, implement change and improve results.
- C Achievements** Leading broad changes to increase revenue and profit.  
Designing and implementing divisional strategic plans.  
Implementing staff performance management systems.  
Establishing a new department and its budgets.  
Facilitating the installation of varied IT solutions.  
Instigating successful measures to improve customer service.
- E Career History** 1996 – July 03 Knight Frank London  
**Director – Business Expansion (July 2002 – July 03)**  
Appointed to head expansion strategy of acquisitions and new branches.  
Devising and implementing plans to increase number of branches by 40% and contribute additional £10m in revenues within five years.  
Responsible for all aspects of new businesses; research, negotiation, recruitment, marketing and project management.
- Director – Lettings and Management (Mar 2000 – June 2002)**  
Responsible for division of 200 staff based in 30 locations in the UK and Hong Kong. Divisional turnover £12m, company turnover £50m  
**Achievements**  
- Established and communicated divisional strategy.  
- Developed senior management team to focus on growth strategy.  
- Rationalised branch network to fit strategy.  
- Created new departments to broaden the services and long-term profitability of the division.
- Director – London Sales Division (1998 – Mar 2000)**  
Responsible for division of 90 staff based in 14 locations in London. Turnover £9m.  
**Achievements**  
- Introduced staff performance management measures and performance awards.  
- Created and implemented a strategic growth plan.  
- Designed and implemented new marketing programme.  
- Expanded network and sales teams to increase market share.
- Manager – Finance and Administration (1996 – 1998)**  
Responsible for Finance, Payroll, Client Accounting and HR departments. Of company with turnover £40m and 700 staff. Managed 25 staff.  
Participated in operational management of the company.  
Introduced focused performance reporting systems.

# Senior CV gaffes – and how to avoid them (page two)

You may know all the basics of good CV-writing, but that's no cause for complacency.

As Linda Clark explains, even applicants at the highest level can make mistakes.

(MBA BUSINESS, MARCH 2004)

**F** Steve's CV tells me he has been an Accountant from 1981 to 1996 (quite a long time) including some time out travelling. Although he has worked/lived in different countries, it does not indicate great motivation or ambition. Try to show progression in your roles by stating increasing people responsibility, working with larger budgets and/or in larger organisations.

**G** These are not strictly 'qualifications'; they are 'professional memberships'. Pay attention to every detail on your CV.

**H** It has been suggested that listing 'long distance running' as an interest may indicate you are a loner and not a team player. This is a difficult area to be too prescriptive ; I like to see 'sport' in some form (assuming it is the truth!) because it shows me that the candidate keeps fit and takes care of their health.

**I** I like to read that people have interests other than their work but I think Steve has given me too much information here about his domestic situation !

Do pay attention to detail on your CV – spelling, grammar, punctuation etc. If you end some bullet points with full stops then make sure you do this consistently. Employers and headhunters notice these details and generally take the view that a smart CV means a smart candidate.

**F**

1993 – 1996 Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society London

**Accountant**

Responsible for Finance and Client Accounting departments. Managed 15 staff. General accounting and management duties.

1989 – 1992 Various Canada

**Temporary Roles**

Accounting and hospitality jobs whilst traveling extensively.

1986 – 1988 Emerald Minerals NL Cape Town

**Group Accountant**

Responsible for Finance, HR, Payroll and Administration. 20 staff reporting. Company turnover £25m.

1981 – 1985 John Foster Ltd Cape Town

**Assistant Accountant**

Member of the Chartered Management Institute.  
Member of the Association of MBAs.

**G**

**Summary of qualifications**

**Education**

1994 – 1996 Open University

**Master of Business Administration**

Part-time study. Electives in International Enterprise, Human Resources, Strategic Management.

1981 – 1986 Central University Cape Town

**Bachelor of Business**

Part-time study.

1980 Constantia Grammar School Cape Town

**H**

**Personal**

Date of Birth: 12 September 1962

Citizenship: UK

Interests: Football, long distance running.

**I**

Family: Having recently become a father at a relatively late stage in my life, I like to spend as much time as possible playing with my 2 year old son and enjoying parenthood