How to create a CV website

Scott Beagrie

Yes, you can get by with a static, paper-based CV, but increasingly individuals are posting online versions to showcase their talents. A major advantage is that online CVs offer more scope and more space to sell yourself and are a 24/7 reference point for prospective employers – wherever they are in the world.

Until now, online CVs have been used more in the creative and high-tech industries, but there's every reason for HR professionals to get in on the act, too.

Ed Miller, a web designer specialising in online CVs and portfolios, has produced CV websites for a diverse clientele ranging from hairdressers to door fitters.

"An online presence is as much of a helpful tool in today's job world as an e-mail address or a mobile phone number," he says.

Executed well, CV websites can make a real statement and, if you believe in a freelance future where we will all sell our services via the web, they might well become a necessity. As it's a 'live' medium, it also provides a compelling reason to make sure your CV is never out of date.

Where do I start?

The chances are your current CV is in the form of a Microsoft Word document, and this can form the basis for your website so ensure it's up to date. Make any important additions to the text and expand on your experience if relevant.

Check out other online CVs (see links) to get an idea of a style you like and whether you want to include extra features, such as examples of your work or research. You may also want to include a personal profile highlighting your skills, aspirations and career goals.

Avoid being unnecessarily wordy, just because you don't have to confine your achievements to two A4 sides anymore – there's a limit to what potential employers will read on screen.

The web provides the opportunity to drill down to more detailed information if required so it's worth summarising your work experience on the home page, with a full version for those who want to click through.

Can I build a good CV website myself?

While we can all manage to create a physical CV, designing for cyberspace requires a little more expertise. Microsoft's Word package offers basic web design tools and, if you're accomplished at desktop publishing and can produce reports and manuals, it might well be within your capabilities.

Aside from a well-designed site, the other plusses of opting for a web designer to do the job is that they will undertake all of the technical essentials such as domain name registering (hopefully securing the web address you want in the process), sorting out who can host it for you, and physically posting your site on the web. If you've signed up to an internet service provider at home, free web space may be included as part of your subscription package.

What makes an effective CV website?

Keep the design clean and unfussy with good navigation and signposting – a designer will advise you on the look and feel.

Don't get carried away with inter-activity, as HR professionals do not need sophisticated animation and graphics. Less graphics and frippery will also mean a quicker download.

Do I need to register with search engines?

Some employers are already using keywords to search for appropriate talent via CV websites, but it's still early days on this score.

If you're going to be directing prospective employers to your site via a web address, rather than hope that someone will come and find your site, there's less of a need to register with a search engine. It is, however, something to bear in mind for the future, especially if, we will all be able to sell our services via the web.

Should I include links?

Yes. If you've been involved in a significant piece of research or study that resides on another site, include a hyperlink to it. Or if you have been profiled or featured in the trade or national press or on television, you could link to the article or video-clip. But always bear in mind the purpose of the CV, says Millar.

"The internet is not constrained by an A4 space or the size of an envelope, so experiment all you like as long as you keep the central professional idea in mind," he says.

If you only do 5 things...

1. Update your CV
2. Look at other CV websites to get ideas
3. Talk to a web designer
4. Keep the design simple and uncluttered
5. Check out internet service provider deals for free web space

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