

## What employers look for in Job Candidate

**Author: Memory Nguwi . October 2019**

As a human capital consultancy, we interact greatly with employers, employees and prospective employees alike – particularly when providing recruitment services. Over the years we have realised a huge gap between what employers are looking for and what prospective employees have to offer or what they think their potential employers as looking for. We believe that whilst it is important for employers to know what they want – qualification, experience, skills and competencies – from the on-set, (before initiating the recruitment process) it is also equally important for prospective employees to competitively present and position themselves –through the curriculum vitae, at the interview and more importantly on the job.

Realising this need we approached 29 Senior Managers and Business Executive and asked them various questions relevant to the employability of a typical job seeker. The questions ranged from what distinguishes one curriculum vita from the others and what eventually causes preference to one and not the other. We also asked what potential employers really look for in the interview room.

The Survey respondents were asked: when shortlisting candidates based on their Curriculum Vitae's, what do you look for? 72% of the respondents said they look at the candidate's qualifications. Again, 79% said they look at the candidate's experience- relevant experience. It is therefore important for candidates to ensure that their Curriculum Vitae clearly outlines their experience and qualifications; these must be easy to locate on the Curriculum Vitae. The challenge that most applicants have is that they hide – often unintentionally- these key attributes of the Curriculum Vitae.

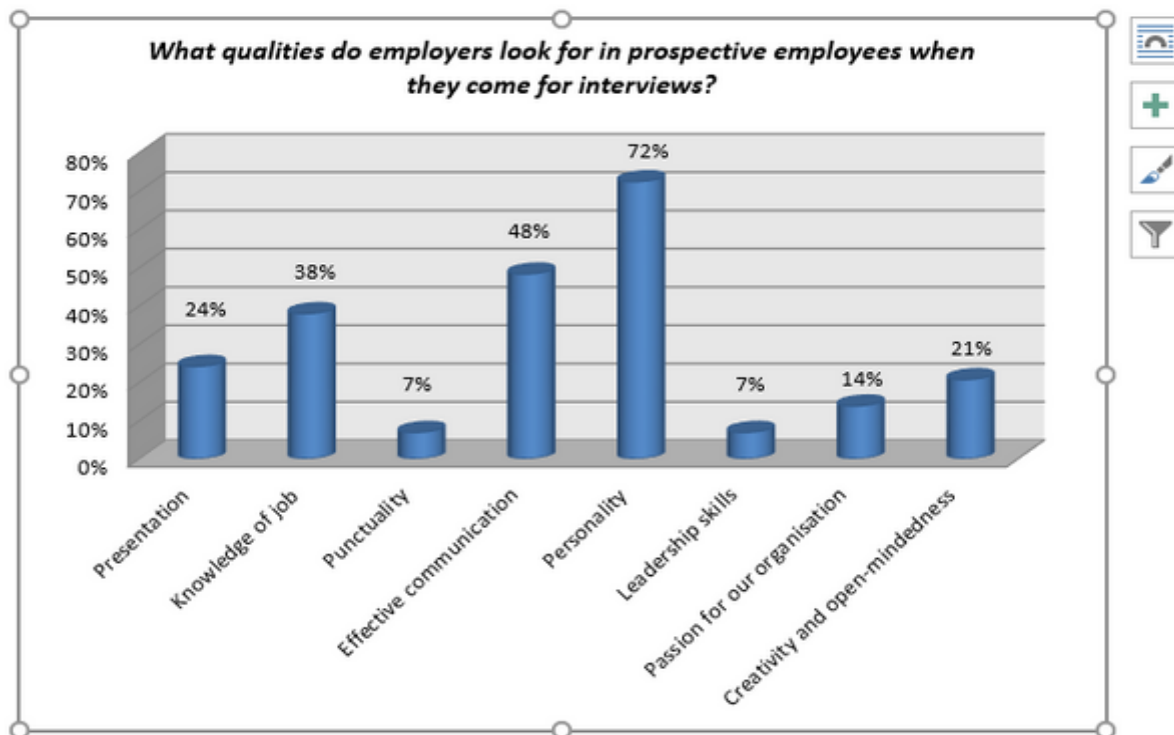
Curriculum Vitae presentation and layout is very important; essentially, the curriculum vitae is the ambassador of the candidate. The curriculum vitae should be concise and to the point. Headings should be clearly distinguished from the main text. The recommended format should be the applicant's name, contacts details and a summary of the key skills, qualifications and competencies. This should be followed by a very brief career objective- this gives your 'would-be' employer a quick appreciation of the person-job fit before they consider your relevant experience and qualification. After this comes to detail of your employment history. Be sure to clearly state the name of the employer, the start date as well as the end date of your employment contract there. Also, mention your position/ title and then provide a brief of your responsibilities and/or achievements there. Remember that these should be brief and to the point. Guidelines as to what to include under the main duties and responsibilities should be found in the job advert. Please note that your employment history should be in chronological order, starting with your most recent employer.

The employment history is followed by an outline of the education/ qualifications you have. In essence, you have told your potential employer what you can do and have done; naturally, this should arouse interest and answer the question: are you qualified to do that? When detailing your qualification(s) start with the institution from which you earned the qualification followed by the country/ city in which the

institution is, then provide the full name of the qualification followed finally by the year in which it was completed. It is not mandatory to put the individual subjects; if anything, by so doing you risk making your curriculum vitae too long. Remember that there are probably two hundred other applications that need to be reviewed. Your curriculum vitae needs to be relevant, concise and to the point – easy for the ‘would-be’ employer to get to the attributes they are looking for and to see if you meet the minimum hiring standards.

The next section of your curriculum vitae should include your skills summary (e.g. computer literacy and familiarity with the Microsoft Suite of Packages); professional membership (e.g. Institute of People Management Zimbabwe); Interest/ Hobbies (reading the newspaper/ novels) and any Other Relevant Information. The final section is your Referees (or References) Section. You must always put at least three contactable references. The best-case scenario is where their references are involved in similar work as your potential employer. The references should be presented in a clear and logical manner that follows the following order: name, company/organisation (and the country in which the organisation is), position, contact telephone (where possible both landline and cell phone) and contact email. Remember that it is common courtesy to inform your referees that you have placed them on your Curriculum Vitae.

Should you be shortlisted, the next stage is the interview. Interviews provide an opportunity for the employer to meet the prospective employee in person. Having been ‘impressed’ by your curriculum vitae, the employer now wants to meet the person behind the curriculum vitae. The interview is an opportunity to effectively market you as the candidate. When asked what they will be looking for in an interview most (72%) of the respondents said they will be seeking to understand the personality of the individual. This is a very interesting statistic, yet maybe a true reflection of industry in general in Zimbabwe at the moment. With many organisations struggling to break even, employers want employees who are flexible, adaptable and receptive to change. They want employees who are willing and able to do the best of their work with the most minimal of resources and tightest of budgets; this calls for innovation and shrewdness on the part of the employee.



Employers are looking for slightly different qualities from graduates; they are looking for graduates with an understanding of core business principles, systems and processes, graduates that exhibit technical ability - whatever their field. The graduate must show a willingness to learn and continually update knowledge - this is more important than a stock of knowledge. The graduate must also display problem-solving abilities but employers are only moderately satisfied with this because of graduates' lack of real business application

Our research revealed that after all the CV shortlisting and selection in an interview, employers want to understand if the prospective employee has good knowledge and fully understands the economic, socio-cultural dynamics that affect business and its operations. Prospective employees must also exhibit a passion for the company/organisation, its people, and the job at hand. I have facilitated interviews where the candidates have no idea about what the company does; this simply suggests that you are not interested in the company. Obviously, the required competencies to do the job do not need to be overemphasised - prospective employees must demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the job at hand.

Next week I will continue this article and talk about other issues affecting prospective employees in their application process. I have had people ask me, do employers look at the type of companies I have worked for before or the schools that I attended when shortlisting? Others have also asked me: if I have done a job that I am not really proud of, that is, a job that is not in line with my career goals, should I include it on my CV? I will also address these questions.

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