Curriculum Vitae

That works in the translation industry

Marta Stelmaszak

Marta.stelmaszak@gmail.com

http://www.wantwords.co.uk

Twitter: @mstelmaszak

LinkedIn: Marta Stelmaszak

What's inside?

1. Before you begin

CVs sell. CVs sell you. All these years of education, experience and struggling to get as professional in translation as possible have to be packed and stacked on few pages, to become a regular marketing pitch.

In almost every industry, CV is just a formality to pre-approve candidates and invite them for an interview. Translation is different. Very often your CV is the only part of you that the client gets to see, as they might be located on the other side of the world.

That's why it's crucial for translators to have excellent CVs.

I work as a translator, but I recruit translators and interpreters for others as well. I have seen some CVs, I have read some guides, my own CV got rejected only twice (neither of which occasions I regret). Well, why that bit of experience should be wasted staying just with me?

Thank you for your interest in this e-book and use every word of it! You can also contact me for a free assessment of your CV: I will go through it and make some suggestions on how you could improve it to get better results.

Find me on Twitter (@mstelmaszak), LinkedIn (Marta Stelmaszak) or on my website (http://www.wantwords.co.uk).

Marta Stelmaszak

1.   *What is your motivation to write this CV?*

Well, don't laugh at me. It's not an obvious question. I bet that an immediate answer would be: to get this job. Ok, I accept that. But what if I dig deeper and ask: what kind of job is that?

Even if you want to have just a generic CV to send to your clients, you have to be clear on what you are looking for and what are your goals. A translator's CV can lead to several jobs:

- *Single, freelance project*
- *Long-term freelance project*
- *Freelance co-operation with an agency*
- *Freelance co-operation with a client*
- *In-house translation*
- *Multilingual vacancy*

Which one are you targeting? Most of us want to get this particular project or attract an agency/client. Your motivation behind a CV must be clear for you. Before you start writing your CV, ask yourself: "What kind of translation job am I looking for?".

2.   *What is its purpose?*

Motivation is about your perspective, while purpose is the receiver's perspective on your CV. Before you write or rewrite your CV, try to imagine that you are on the other side of the business.

Before you write or rewrite your CV, try to imagine that you are on the other side of the business.

I read quite a few translators' CVs every week. I'm sitting in a small, sterile office with a huge screen and a printer, with a cup of coffee and a pen in my hand. I need translators for this particular project, or I need interpreters for longer collaboration. I have already seen 3-4 CVs today, yours is coming next. What does it have to do?

- *Make me read it*

- *Provide me with necessary information*
- *Impress me*
- *Persuade me that you are the best translator for this project*
- *Make me want to write an e-mail to you straight away*

This perspective is very useful, as you can easily imagine what makes a CV a little wonder, and what makes it a struggle (I read all of them, out of professional ethics).

Purpose changes depending on the nature of the job. That's why every CV might need tailoring and amendments on some occasions. And I'm not talking about added fictional bits on achievements that someone never had, I'm talking about restructuring it and exposing some parts over others.

3.   Who will be reading it?

Every text is addressed to someone (so the text theory says) and only than it makes sense. Well, we usually think that people talking to themselves are crazy. For the very same reason we should condemn people writing to themselves.

Start with thinking who might be reading your CV:

Simply imagine your perfect Project Manager or HR officer and write to them. Tell them your story.

- *Project Manager who is a translator*
- *Project Manager who is not a translator*
- *HR department*
- *PA*
- *CEO*
- *Training department*
- *Project Manager in a huge company*
- *Project Manager in a small company*

Regardless of who is actually going to read your CV, it really matters to write it having your audience in mind at all times. Simply imagine your perfect Project Manager or HR officer and write to them. Tell them your story. At least you won't be writing in vacuum.

4.   It takes 20 seconds

When your desired and real Project Manager or Recruitment Officer finally gets down to reading your CV, it takes them only 20 seconds to decide if you are an interesting candidate, or not.

Let's put it that way: if you have 20 seconds during a face-to-face interview, how you're going to use them:

- ✕ *Spending 20 seconds on giving personal details, such as nationality, gender, civil status, children and 5 lines of address, or*
- ✕ *Spending 20 seconds on describing your educational path starting from your primary school, or*
- ✕ *Using 20 seconds on presenting all details possible of your every position (even not translation-related), or*
- ✕ *Using these 20 seconds on sharing your squash passion?*

Well, neither of these, I hope! But these are the mistakes that people make, simply because they don't focus on the purpose and motivation of a CV (especially this bit about personal details: very often in translation it doesn't matter what's your street address. You're working remotely anyway).

Instead, you can spend these 20 seconds much better. Very rarely a reader will manage to get any lower than your Profile Statement, so make sure that everything from top to the end of your Statement:

- ✓ *Shows that you have the right skills*
- ✓ *Shows that you are experienced in using these skills*
- ✓ *Shows understanding of your audience's position (they need flexible people who keep deadlines, etc)*
- ✓ *Shows that others benefitted from choosing you*

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5. *Read CVs of other translators in your language pair*

Immediately before I started writing this guide on CVs, I had a look on over 50 CVs from different language pairs. It is a great fun from sociological point of view: you can actually see general differences in layout and format as you browse through languages and cultures.

But you don't have to do that at all. Simply go to Proz.com, open the Translators and Interpreters directory and choose your language pair. There will be plenty of people in there with their CVs accessible and available to download.

Have a read through them. Pay attention to the way they're laid down. Make notes on which parts you like, and which parts you don't.

II. Drawing a plan

1. Planning for sections

Take a blank piece of paper and write down all these headlines with about 2-3 cm space in between: Personal details, Professional headline, Profile statement, Key achievements, Professional experience, Qualifications, Professional memberships, Publications (if not in Achievements), General skills and hobbies.

> *Plan your CV to encapsulate the highlights of your achievements and personality in the beginning, and use the rest of space to prove that you're telling the truth.*

That's the exact order they should appear on your CV, and that's the exact order of importance. You will have 100% of your reader's attention in the first 20 seconds (see previous section), so make sure that these 20 seconds will be enough to make it till the end of Profile statement.

We know that the top is the most important part. Plan your CV to encapsulate the highlights of your achievements and personality in the beginning, and use the rest of space to prove that you're telling the truth.

2. Being logical

If your Personal statement says that you're great in organising, extraordinary in stress management and perfect in keeping tight deadlines, make sure that these are not just empty slogans.

Logics in CVs is all about using sections to support points you made in your Statement. If you are great in organising, explain what makes you say so in your Professional experience.

Personal statement	Professional experience
Great management skills	Managed a 1,000,000 words project for over 6 months
Timekeeping	Delivered over 345 projects on time
Organisational skills	Runned own office for over 10 years
Stress management	Performed well on few short notice assignments
Creativity	Advised a client on some culture-related issues

3.   What's your strongest point?

Let's face it: not everyone graduated from languages in Oxford and not everyone has over 20 years of experience. It doesn't mean that you have less to offer.

If you spent many years on training, development and education, you can be "comprehensively trained", "professionally suited", or even "academically guided".

If you lack education, but spent 10 years translating and your customers love you, you can be "brilliantly experienced", "verified by clients' satisfaction" or even "brimming with experience".

Technology and software can make you stand out. As well as being a newcomer to the industry, or being a well-established translator.

You have to find your strongest point and evaluate on it.

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4.   What's your Unique Selling Proposition?

In other words: what makes you stand out from the crowd? Are you fast? Are you accurate? You don't usually make any typos? Name it!

USP comes from professional selling. It's this factor that differs products and is used in marketing campaigns to convince you. People also have USPs. It's this value that you have and you build your sales upon it. Write your USP down and incorporate it into your Headline or Statement.

III.   CV step by step

1.   Personal details

It's the first thing your reader pays attention to, but it's not the most important bit.

Do:

- ✓ Write all the necessary details: name, surname and basic contact
- ✓ Provide as many contact ways as possible: skype, twitter, linkedin, own website
- ✓ Include logos of translation institutes and organisations you belong to

Don't:

- ✗ Add your picture
- ✗ Write your Date of birth, place of birth or age
- ✗ Write 5 lines of address
- ✗ Include your marital or civil status
- ✗ Write Personal details line by line

2.   Professional headline

I was shocked by how many translators don't actually include one on their CVs. It's one of the biggest mistakes you can make. A decent headline should at least spell out your language combination and what do you to:

- ▪ English - Arabic Legal Translator
- ▪ Polish - English Interpreter
- ▪ Native English Proofreader
- ▪ Russian to English Translation Services

Honestly, every headline is better than no headline. A good headline adds your USP to it, so you become:

- *Reliable English - Arabic Legal Translator*
- *Well-established Polish - English Interpreter*
- *Experienced Native English Proofreader*
- *Timely Russian to English Translation Services*

3. Personal statement

Who you are, what do you do and why they should pick you in 2-3 lines and few bullet points. Try to use these 2-3 lines of text to build rich and interesting expressions and leave bullet points for your key skills.

Later, remember to prove these skills in your experience section. Unsupported skills will cause frustration in your reader.

Try to avoid using first person in your statement, for few reasons. Firstly: instead of writing "I", you can write "Professional Hindi translator". Secondly, CV is a pitch, not a conversation or a diary. Thirdly, readers don't really like showing off in others.

4. Key achievements

I don't believe that there is even one translator out there with no achievements to list. And if you have them, impress your reader.

Most of us have them, and they are related to our strongest points. If you translated 19,000,000 words so far, be proud of it. If you led a successful translation team, show it. If you gained several customers from one recommendation, share it.

Key achievements depend very much on what makes you feel proud of yourself. Look for inspiration in:

- *University education*
- *Work appraisals*
- *Experience*
- *Tough situations you managed to get through*
- *Publications*
- *Lectures and presentations*
- *Professional relation-building*

I don't believe that there is even one translator out there with no achievements to list. And if you have them, impress your reader.

Remember to use action words in your Key achievements section.

5.   Professional experience

This section causes a lot of trouble to translators, because their either write too little, or way too much.

Do:

- *Give details of employment: name, dates and your position*
- *Provide 2-3 lines of summary*
- *Summarise 4-5 points of your main achievements there*
- *If you are a freelancer, write it down and present some of your customers, or some kinds of documents you have translated*

Don't:

- *Waste time and space providing your employer's address and telephone number*
- *Ramble on with your achievements and role*

× *List all your experience, even not translation-related (well, if you do medical translation and you worked for 20 years as a GP, that matters. But if you came to the UK and started as a waitress, you'd better cut it out)*
× *Skip your achievements in this workplace*

6. Qualifications

Believe me, there is no point in listing them anywhere higher than here. In translation it doesn't really matter what was your university or degree (if it is really outstanding, list it in your Key achievements). Most of relevant qualifications have their magical letters anyway, so put them by your surname. A reader will most probably know what they stand for, and if not, he or she will easily find explanations in your Qualifications section.

Don't list all your qualifications starting from primary school. Use this part to say which bits of your education show that you are a good translator: trainings, courses, university, diplomas, exams, conferences.

NVQ Level 2 in Bar Management might not be the best thing to list for a legal translator. On the other hand, NVQ Level 1 in Health and Safety may win you a contract for translating a health and safety document.

7. Professional memberships

Don't take me wrong, they do matter. But unfortunately they matter less to your clients than to you. You should use your designatory letters just by your name and hope that they are popular enough to be recognised.

Details of your memberships can be provided further down your CV.

8. Publications

If you have plenty of them and you didn't include them in your Achievements section, go ahead and list them here. But don't list all of them. Pick only these most relevant and impressive.

9. General skills

Believe me, this is the best place to write down your computer skills, personal skills and any other languages you speak, as well as your hobbies and interests. From your reader's point of view: that's the least important bit of your CV. But your reader will go through it anyway, that's why you shouldn't just neglect it. Write about:

- Computer skills
- Personal skills
- Languages
- Hobbies
- Other skills

IV.   Revision and perfecting

1.   Good language

Well, translators know something about choosing right words. But all too often they forget about their brilliant ability when they write their own CVs.

Use action (also called: power) verbs. Using these words at the start of each bullet point will make your reader notice your achievements much better.

Power verbs to accentuate organisational skills:

Arranged	Ordered
Categorised	Organised
Collected	Prepared
Compiled	Recorded
Corrected	Registered
Distributed	Reserved
Filed	Responded
Incorporated	Reviewed
Logged	Scheduled
Maintained	Screened
Monitored	Supplied
Observed	Updated

Power verbs used to highlight achievements:

Achieved	Increased
Built	Initiated
Created	Instigated
Developed	Launched
Established	Lead
Expanded	Managed
Founded	Reduced
Identified	Solved
Implemented	Streamlined

Other power verbs:

Administered	Designed
Advised	Instructed
Analysed	Introduced
Approved	Maintained
Completed	Negotiated
Conducted	Oversaw
Controlled	Performed
Coordinated	Planned
Defined	Presented
Delivered	Supervised
Demonstrated	Supported

Here are nouns you can use too:

- *Ability*
- *Capacity*
- *Competence*
- *Effectiveness*
- *Vigorous*

And a few adjectives and adverbs:

- *Actively*
- *Competent*
- *Consistent*
- *Pertinent*
- *Proficient*
- *Qualified*
- *Resourceful*
- *Substantially*
- *Technically*
- *Versatile*

I attach a full list of active verbs further down.

Use these verbs wisely, don't overload your sentences with too many of them. But they really do work.

2. Proofreading

In translation business, proofreading of your CV matters more than in almost any other job. Make your CV spotless and flawless, as it will be scrutinised by merciless grammar and punctuation titans. Running a spellchecker is not enough. Print your CV and have your friend read it. Then read it yourself.

3.   Format

I'm not giving you any tips on fonts or graphics, because there is no one solution to that. However, there is one important thing every translator should know about: .pdf is way better than .doc or .docx. Why?

- *.pdf documents are more professional than .doc*
- *.pdf documents don't have compatibility issues*
- *.pdf documents can be viewed with Acrobat, which is free download*
- *.pdf documents are safer*
- *.pdf documents are industry standard*
- *.pdf documents look better*

How do you make your CV be .pdf?

1. Write it down in any word processing software you have
2. Download a free PDF Creator (I use SourceForge – free and easy to use)
3. "Print" your document in your PDF Creator

V.   CV Checklist

Checklist	Done
1. I am writing this CV because... **2. Purpose of my CV is to...** **3. I have listed:** Personal details: name, surname, contact, logos of institutions or my titles Professional headline with my working languages Profile statement: 2-3 lines and key skills in bullet points Key achievements Professional experience: Name of company, dates, position, summary and achievements Qualifications Professional memberships Publications General Skills **4. I have proofread my CV** **5. I have formatted it** **6. I printed it, read it and gave it to my friend for a review**	

VI.   Foreword

I wanted to exemplify this guide with real-CV examples, taken from Proz.com. I wanted to hide personal details of people and just discuss the way they present information. But I thought that it's not the right way to do it. I can go about the theory of CV writing, but I wouldn't dare to criticise anybody's work.

If you want me to, I can have a look on your CV with your consent and write some suggestions privately, so that you can improve your CV yourself. Don't hesitate to contact me!

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Action verbs from A to Z

A

Accelerated
Accomplished
Achieved
Acted
Activated
Adapted
Addressed
Adjusted
Administered
Advertised
Advised
Advocated
Analyzed
Applied
Appraised
Approved
Arbitrated
Arranged
Ascertained
Assembled
Assessed
Attained
Audited
Augmented
Authored

B

Balanced
Billed
Bound
Briefed
Budgeted
Built

C

Carried out
Charted
Clarified
Closed
Coached
Collaborated
Collected
Communicated
Compared
Compiled
Completed
Composed
Computed
Conceived
Conceptualized
Concluded
Conducted
Conserved
Consolidated
Constructed
Consulted
Contracted
Controlled
Converted
Coordinated
Corrected
Counseled
Created
Cultivated
Curtailed
Cut

D

Decided
Decreased
Defined
Delegated
Delivered
Demonstrated
Designated
Derived
Designed
Detailed
Detected
Determined
Developed
Devised
Diagnosed
Directed
Discovered
Displayed
Dissected
Distributed
Diverted
Drew up

E

Earned
Edited
Educated
Effected
Eliminated
Enabled
Encouraged
Endorsed
Enforced
Engaged
Engineered
Entertained
Established
Estimated
Evaluated
Examined
Exchanged
Executed
Expanded
Expedited
Experimented
Explained
Expressed
Extracted
Extended

F

Facilitated
Fashioned
Filed
Financed
Followed
Formed
Formulated
Found
Founded

G

Gathered
Generated
Governed
Guided

H

Handled
Hypothesized

I

Identified
Illustrated
Implemented
Improved
Improvised
Increased
Influenced
Informed
Initiated
Innovated
Inspected
Inspired
Installed
Instituted
Instructed
Interpreted
Intervened
Interviewed
Introduced
Invented
Invested
Investigated

J/K

Judged
Kept

L

Launched
Lectured
Led

M

Maintained
Managed
Manipulated
Mastered
Maximized
Measured

Mediated
Mentored
Merged
Minimized
Modeled
Modernized
Modified
Monitored
Motivated

N

Navigated
Negotiated
Notified

O

Observed
Obtained
Opened
Operated
Optimized
Ordered
Organized
Originated
Oversaw

P

Packed
Participated
Perceived
Performed
Persuaded
Piloted
Pinpointed
Planned
Predicted
Prepared
Presented
Problem-solved
Processed
Procured
Produced
Programmed
Promoted
Proofread
Projected
Proposed

Proved
Provided
Publicized
Published
Purchased

Q/R

Questioned
Queried
Quizzed

Raised
Reasoned
Received
Recommended
Reconciled
Recorded
Recruited
Reduced
Referred
Refined
Regulated
Rehabilitated
Reinforced
Rendered
Renewed
Reorganized
Repaired
Replaced
Reported
Represented
Researched
Resolved
Responded
Restored
Restructured
Retrieved
Revamped
Reviewed
Revised
Revitalized
Risked

S

Safeguarded
Scheduled
Screened
Selected

Served
Serviced
Set up
Shaped
Shipped
Simplified
Sold
Solved
Sponsored
Started
Streamlined
Strengthened
Structured
Studied
Suggested
Summarized
Supervised
Supplemented
Supplied
Surpassed

Surveyed
Synthesized
Systematized

T

Taught
Team-built
Teamed
Tested
Trained
Transcribed
Translated
Trouble-shot
Tuned
Tutored
Typed

U

Understudied
Undertook
Unified
United
Updated
Upgraded
Used
Utilized

V/W

Verbalized

Won
Wrote