



The difference between an Executive and a Non-Executive (and why it impacts your CV)

We are receiving a huge number of CVs for high-level roles at the moment. But too many candidates are missing opportunities to stand out. It is clear that many use the same CV regardless of the role they are applying for.

When it comes to Executive and Non-Executive Director (NED) roles, a tailored approach is definitely more effective. The two are entirely different and your CV should reflect this.

We want to explain the difference between Executive and NED roles, before providing some practical advice on making the most of your CV when applying.

The Non-Executive Director: a Board role

When you apply to become a NED for an organisation, you are taking on a strategic, board level position. Reporting to the Chair, you will be collectively responsible for the overall direction, including overall leadership, governance, and financial assurance.

There is also a level of risk management when you are a NED. As a Board Director, you are legally responsible for your Executives' actions and any consequences sit firmly with the Board. You are not simply a consultant.

NEDs must listen to all parties, respect the structure of delegation, and provide advice when necessary. You need to know the business inside out and prepare to challenge certain activities. Whilst you will not be involved in the day to day operations of the business, you will regularly liaise with the Executive team.

We know that some individuals hold more than one NED role at the same time. It is important to avoid any conflict of interest.

The Executive: a management role

When you take on an Executive role, you report to the CEO. Your responsibilities focus on running the business day to day. Your work will focus around operations and achieving the objectives set.

As an Executive Team, you will be directly accountable to the Board and liaise regularly with them. To run smoothly, the organisation needs both structures.

Executives do not have legal responsibilities and take their lead from the Board, even when they have helped to determine the strategic direction.

An Executive and a NED are different roles. As such, your CV must reflect the right skills and experiences to demonstrate your suitability. By paying attention to this, your CV will stand out among the one hundred or so we typically receive for each high-level role.

How to tailor your CV to the specific role

It is a joy to pick up a CV that has been written with the particular role in mind. When so many candidates are firing off the same CV for every application, it is clear to see who has taken the time to create a more relevant case.

Tailoring your CV will gain attention from the start. By presenting your most relevant skills and experience for the role, you make it easy for people like us to progress your application further.

So, how do you do this?

Firstly, take the time to fully understand the role and the organisation. If there is an opportunity to phone for more information, do so. You can chat about the role and develop a deeper understanding. And it goes without saying that Google provides a wealth of information on the business in question and its leaders.

Commit to a CV no more than three pages. Ideally, two pages, but not if that results in crammed content.

Your covering letter should be no more than two pages as well. What you cannot say in that length is unnecessary at this stage.

Get to the point

Make it easy for your CV to shine. Create a concise headline to sum up your relevant strengths. No more than five lines.

Include the role you are applying for, your profession, your core expertise and unique strengths, and the type of organisation you gained experience from.

Use engaging language and avoid complex words and long sentences. Provide every opportunity to be clearly understood in seconds.

Your headline provides the all-important first impression. It either compels the reader to discover more or leaves them feeling the role might not suit you. Take time to do yourself justice in these five lines.

Focus on outcomes

Essentially, we want to know what you've achieved.

- Have you increased productivity? By how much?
- Have you reduced workplace accidents? By how many?
- Have you generated savings? By how much?

Be concise and results-focused, always with the specific role in mind.

Simply saying: "I'm ideally suited to this role," with no demonstrable proof is pointless.

Lay out your past experience in a clear and structured manner. Start by concisely detailing the role, the organisation, its size, and your job's purpose.

Below this, highlight your relevant outcomes and achievements, using specific metrics. They provide proof of your potential suitability.

Make it a great read

Successful CVs have one thing in common: they are a pleasure to read. This comes down to how you write it, as well as what you write.

- Choose energetic verbs such as influenced and pioneered
- Ensure there is white space around your copy
- Do not use an unclear font or make it too small
- Use line breaks and sub-headings to break your copy

Choosing a contemporary font (not Times New Roman!) and sticking to a modern look will stand you in good stead. Remember that the person reading your CV has many more.

Our advice on photos

Many candidates choose to include a photo on their CV. This is not necessary as we assess your application on your skills and experience, not how you look.

If you must include a photo, choose it wisely. Select an image in keeping with the organisation and your work culture. Avoid holiday snaps and photos taken at social occasions.

If you have not got a suitable photo, do not include one because it is not necessary.

Avoid these common mistakes

You might think you would never fall foul of these errors, but they are surprisingly common. Prior to sending your application, consciously check for each one.

Check your contact details

We receive many applications addressed to the wrong recruitment agency or mentioning the wrong role in the covering letter. This does not showcase your attention to detail.

Check your grammar

Typos and bad grammar always reflect badly. None more so than in an application for a high-level organisational role. Whilst we are not all perfect wordsmiths, it is easy to find someone to help you with this.

Inconsistent LinkedIn profile

We will review the LinkedIn profile of candidates we are assessing. If your profile timelines different experience or skills, it will appear inconsistent. Ensure it is up to date and reflects you in the same light.

Conflict of interest

Quite simply, avoid having one! If you are unsure, chat to us before applying. Do not compromise your integrity by overlooking a conflict.

Do not cram it all in

Dense copy and small fonts are not the answers for too much content.

Do you need to say it all on your CV? Focus on layout before length. Whilst the ideal CV would be two pages, we would rather receive three nicely laid out pages than two pages of crammed content.

Beyond your application

Once you have tailored your CV to the specific role, created a fabulous first impression and submitted your application, use the intervening time to prepare for a possible interview.

You might not have had an interview for some time, and at the moment, at least some stages will take place via video conferencing software such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Make yourself familiar with these software tools and get practicing. You could ask a family member or friend to help you.

We wrote an article providing [tips for online interviews](https://emaconsultancy.org.uk/our-news/interviewing-by-skype/) which you can find at <https://emaconsultancy.org.uk/our-news/interviewing-by-skype/>. It will help you prepare yourself, and your environment, for the next steps.

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