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CIPD People Management

The next step: We help you to help your career

My job title is office manager, but most of my duties concern HR. Despite mentioning my HR responsibilities whenever I apply for HR positions, it seems recruiters can't look past my job title.

Look critically at your CV and cover letter. Do they emphasise the HR success you've had, or do these documents suggest a more administratively focused role?

A skills-based CV might better demonstrate your potential, as you can align your skillset with the person specification or role profile. Concentrate on the main ones and highlight them with specific examples.

If your resume begins with your key expertise, you can highlight your relevant experience from the start. This should grab the reader's attention so, when they reach the section with your office manager title, they are already convinced they want to interview you.

When writing a cover letter, discuss your best achievements and make sure these align with the abilities the organisation is looking for. Make best use of the information you have – the job specification, the role profile, even the recruitment section of the company's website is helpful. With these materials, you should be able to understand what attributes the successful candidate should have and then focus on these.

You could also consider your personal and professional development and link that to an action plan. The CIPD's 'my CPD map' has a version which even non-members can use to identify their strengths and receive a personal profile, offering ideas for how they can develop their skills.

Getting detailed feedback on your resume would be great for developing it further. It can be frustrating if this isn't something the company you're applying to will offer, but you can overcome this by contacting your local CIPD branch teams. They offer CV surgeries, application assistance and mentoring support to members.

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