

Dear graduate... Advice from an intern

By [Njongo Sidloyi](#)

25 Oct 2022

Dear graduate, you have now completed or are about to complete your studies. Congratulations are in order! You're finally entering the so-called "real world". (Because apparently where you've been living isn't real?) Truth of the matter is finding your first job can be stressful. *"Am I going to find one? Why would they pick me? Am I even qualified?"* - these are the type of questions that tend to play in the back of your mind.



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I'm here to assure you, if you're stressed about finding a job because you don't have a ton of work experience, you can breathe. Hiring managers aren't expecting you to have a degree plus years of experience, multiple awards and accolades, and a Nobel Prize after graduation. They just want to see you have what it takes to be successful and that's as simple as a compelling CV. If you don't yet have a lot of work experience, you'll need to adapt your CV to suit your lack of experience and instead promote your education and skill set to amplify your opportunities.

Here are some tips you can use to create a graduate CV that helps you get noticed.

1. **Include a personal statement** - Start your CV with a personal statement to introduce yourself. All too often employers only scan through resumes, so you want to get their attention right away with a compelling opening statement. What you have to offer, where you would like your career to go, and who you are as a person. Tailor your statement to fit the job you're applying for. Mention some specifics about the job or the company so the employer knows you've done your research and you specifically want to work for them.
2. **Focus on your education** - Since you're a recent graduate, you likely don't have a lot of work experience yet. This means you want the focus of your CV to be primarily on your education. Make the first section of your CV all about your education, list any specific courses you took related to the job you're applying for, along with the grades you received in them (provided they were good grades), and list any skills and accomplishments you acquired along the way.

3. **List any work experience** - Even if it's not relevant to the job you're applying for, you should mention all the previous work experience you may have, even if it's not much. Employers look out for people who've shown an ability to commit to a job to earn money, even if it's on a casual basis. But keep it brief and simply mention the job title, where you worked, for how long and what your responsibilities were. If you can relate these responsibilities to the job you're applying for, that's even better.
4. **Triple check, triple check, triple check!** - Now if you're like me without any previous work experience, an internship is an excellent opportunity to gain experience, try out a career field and build skills. It personally helped me and could potentially help you become employed at a company full-time after graduation.

Probably worth noting, an internship opportunity can present new challenges but with the right mindset, it can fast-track you towards your career goals.

Here are some tips to help you make the most of your internship and help you develop positive habits in your workplace.

1. **Keep studying your field** - A commitment to ongoing education can help you expand your capabilities and become a competitive candidate. Even after you find an entry-level job, continuing to learn more about your chosen industry may increase your chances of advancement and enable you to make more significant contributions to your field.
2. **Communicate your goals** - When you're new to a job, consider being forthcoming about your ambitions with your supervisors and peers. Letting people know what responsibilities you enjoy, what skills you want to grow, and how you'd like to advance can enable them to better support you.
3. **Take ownership** - If there's a small task that's a regular need in your team, consider becoming an expert in it. For example, you could become highly proficient with a software program that your team uses occasionally, or you might develop a quick method for reporting. Becoming the person a team relies on for a regular task, regardless of the size of the job, can help demonstrate your value as a teammate.
4. **Breathe** - Mistakes can be common when you're new to a job or an industry. Many mistakes are salvageable and often managers appreciate when team members are proactive and honest when they make a mistake. When you make an error, consider approaching your supervisor with an honest explanation of what happened and a plan for how to resolve it. You can then ask if they have any advice for minimising the risk of mistakes in the future. Being communicative in these situations can help you build trust and learn how to improve your processes.
5. **Share your unique perspective** - Everyone has different life experiences, and sharing your individual opinions, ideas and feelings with your team can help you collaborate more effectively and achieve stronger results. We often feel our opinion doesn't matter or add value but junior team members can offer unexpected ideas and improve long-standing processes by suggesting a creative new way of doing things. Learning how to voice your thoughts at work and influence change can help you become a leader among your team.

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