Boost your CV with mistakes!

How to describe any experience in a positive way.

How do you learn to ski? By reading a book and watching tutorials? No way! How many times do you think a good freestyle skier has fallen on his face in the snow? Many times! If you only act/live inside your comfort zone you will never develop and learn new skills! In fact falling and making mistakes is the best way to learn. So tell people about your learning journey that never ends!

Stefan Eekenulv

Whatever you do and work with, you can ALWAYS learn from the situation! Everybody makes mistakes, what defines you as a person and a potential colleague, is how you react to a given situation.

What was your interpretation of the situation when you started, what strategy did you adhere to and what results did you get?

And most importantly, what did you learn from the experience, what would you do differently if you found yourself in a similar situation again?

Picture1. *Start your CV with an* introduction

Picture2. *Simple Visual CV for overview of* Professional life and Family/hobbies.

To talk about "failures" in a structured way can show that your mistakes are crucial for your future development. The most important aspect of you as a person/employee/colleague is your ambition to learn and to adapt.

If the are conflicts and problems in a project (and there always are and always will be!), how good are you at adapting and understanding your part in "the whole"? The biggest mistake you can do is to think that there is a " golden guideline" or a set of correct answers" Everything changes and everyone will make mistakes and will misunderstand situations. But we can all learn and get better from the experience!

An ordinary CV contains a lot of information, dates, role descriptions and keywords for the human resource people. Boring! Use a photo of yourself and start the first page with an introduction explaining your interests, your driving forces and what kind of benefit the company can get from hiring you (see picture 1). Create a visual CV as an appendix (see picture 2). A simple timeline divided in two parts: Professional life and family/hobbies. Often a hobby can be the part that triggers an interview…for example if you organize events and competitions for the local billiard club, maybe you have learnt (i.e. made lots of mistakes☺) to handle customer events and how to interview potential users of a product. All depends on how you understand a situation, how you analyze it and strategically "solve the problem". The way you describe your learning experience is crucial. Some people fall on their face many times but always blame external circumstances for the mistake. Learning is taking responsibility and changing.

On the next page you can see how I try to describe an experience to enhance the learning experience. In fact it does not really matter if the result is outstanding; there are many factors that contribute to the results that are out of your control. Was it really your doing that made the project succeed? Maybe you did everything "right" but something happened that changed the results. Maybe the whole project was meant to be a "failure" and was merely a "Potemkin arrangement" to hide real problems from higher management. In any case, describe your learning experience, and you will get benefit from every situation, good or bad!

Nobody can really tell you if what you are doing is good or meaningful. The more compelling the path, the lonelier it is. Keep on falling! Keep on learning! Keep on describing your experiences! Life is a journey that always ends in death…try to be as good as you can and don't forget to enjoy the ride!
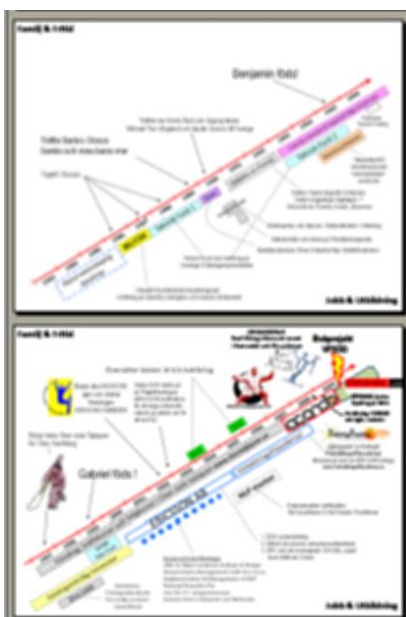
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Describe every experience using the following headers and sub-headers.

ASSIGNMENT: the clients definition of the assignment/project.
e.g. " *Process and Methods enhancements and Mentoring* "

OPENINGi ▶ PROBLEM/SITUATION/CHALLANGE

Problem definition: show your ability to identify, formulate & define the problem (mostly NOT the same as the offical assignment statement!)
The situation: show your ability to identify, define and create a scope for the problem to solve
The MSI: identify the Measurable Success Indicators, so that we all know when to open the "virtual champagne bottle"..the popping sound, the bubbling taste…

OPENINGi ▶ STRATEGIC APPROACH

Actions: what skills did you apply to the specific situation, which tools did you use, did you
try some new ideas, where did you get your inspiration from (give references!)
Technologies/frameworks used: this is the buzzword section that will trigger people looking for specific words in your CV (e.g. development in Dot-net, Adaptation of existing RUP processes.

OPENINGi ▶ RESULTS

Result: describe the result from different perspectives (project group, users, economy etc…)
How did we communicate the solution, feedback for next generation?
Lessons learnt: your misstakes, what could you have done differently, any change in strategy for next similar project? What went OK but nearly wrong or OK by pure chance…?

OPENINGi ▶ POSITIVE COMMENTS & REFERENCES

Comments: add comments assembled from people working in your project. Use text from an
e-mail or transcribe a positive phrase from a conversation with your customer. Do not sign with
full name but use surname and title/role in the project (e.g. "this is the best visualization I have ever seen in any project at this company" Per, Sales Manager
References: add references to the specific project if you feel it is a good idea. There will be a section in the CV for references, but to add a reference directly to the project description makes it very clear for the reader who to contact regarding this project.

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