

Your professional CV: A road map to success

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How to use your CV to achieve your career goals

MOST PEOPLE would agree that nurses, from chief nursing officers and managers to nursing faculty and clinicians at the point of care, demonstrate leadership skills daily. Leadership is realized in many forms—an academic degree, committee membership, professional certification, and more. Your leadership and professional accomplishments can be displayed through a well-written comprehensive curriculum vitae (CV). But creating and maintaining your CV is only the beginning. (To learn how to create your CV, visit americannurse.today.com/creating-professional-cv.) Using it effectively can help with career planning, employment opportunities, and academic progression.

Career planning

Maintaining your CV is imperative when planning your career trajectory. Revisit it annually to see where you are now as well as contemplate where you want to be in the future. Consider for a moment your career goals for the next 5, 10, or 20 years. To achieve those goals, you must intentionally seek opportunities, both in and out of work. For example, if your goal is to become a

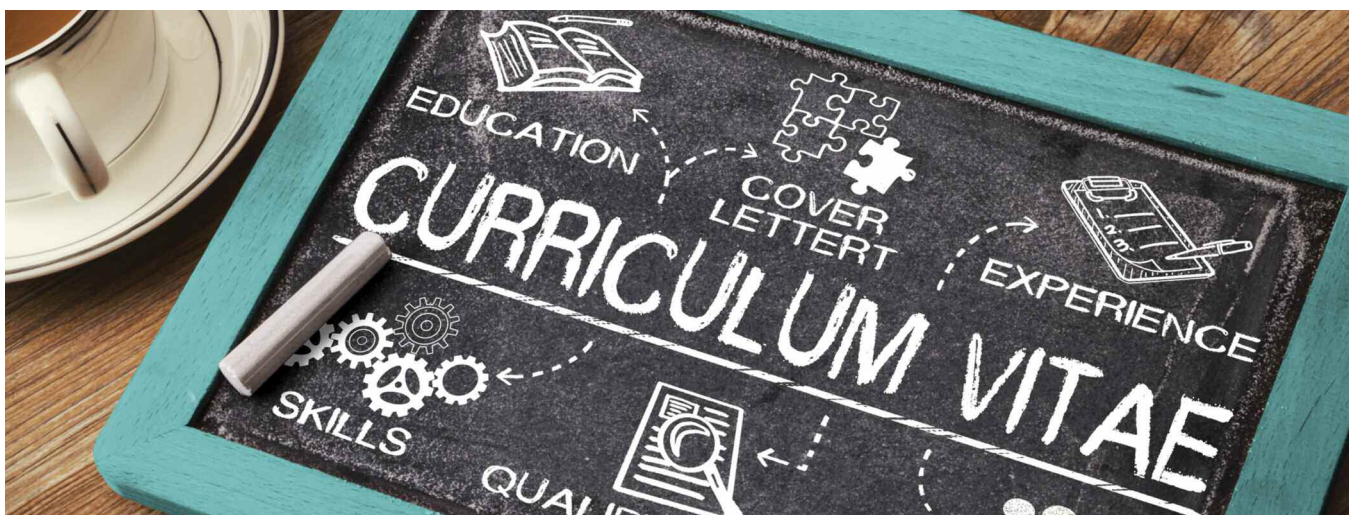
nurse midwife, working in labor and delivery is a vital step, but volunteering in a shelter for homeless pregnant women also may be a solid strategic move toward your professional future.

In addition to examining your professional goals, career planning involves considering personal goals that influence your professional life. Perhaps you want to publish a journal article or present a poster at a national conference next year. These types of goals can be exciting yet daunting. Start by seeking out someone who's published in peer-reviewed journals or presented posters. Ask to work collaboratively on a project. This helps you get your feet wet and reduces anxiety. You'll find that strategic and intentional decisions made during your career progression help build your CV.

Employment opportunities

Vying for nursing positions is frequently highly competitive; you want to have an edge over other candidates. Your CV will influence whether you're invited to interview. You may need to make modifications based on the position for which you're applying. Spotlight key information that showcases your abilities specific to that position. For example, if you're applying for a clinical management position but you've been a nurse educator for 5 years, edit the CV to promote the management aspects of your time as an educator. Be sure your CV helps you outshine other applicants.

Interviewing lets you showcase yourself in person,



Road map to using your CV

Using your curriculum vitae (CV) effectively requires thinking about where you are and where you want to be. This road map will help you chart your course and ensure that your CV highlights your skills and accomplishments.



and your CV should augment the interview. Discuss areas of your CV specific to the position, address personal attributes that make you an excellent fit, and highlight your proudest accomplishments. To alleviate awkward questions from an interview committee, initiate an honest and transparent discussion about gaps in your CV; maybe you took time off to have children or return to school.

A well-developed CV is a road map of your professional life and a tool to use during an interview. When the interview concludes, your CV will remain as a reminder of who you are and what you've accomplished.

Academic progression

Applying to school for an advanced degree is an admirable career goal. Perhaps you're interested in becoming a nurse practitioner, but many qualified applicants are vying for limited seats. A robust CV can give you the edge over other applicants.

Using your CV for academic progression is similar to using it for employment opportunities. Research the institution and the admission requirements, then highlight the specific skills that will ensure your success in the desired program. If you want to become a neonatal nurse practitioner, for example, put accomplishments such as certification in neonatal nursing and working in the neonatal intensive care unit for the past 10 years center stage in the CV.

Highlighting career moves that show strategic planning and initiative may give you an advantage over other applicants. If you're a member of a nursing honor society, highlight that fact. It demonstrates stellar academic achievement. Also, note volunteer activities related to your program of interest. You may or may not be interviewed when applying to an academic institution, so your CV may be the only representation of you, your accomplishments as a nurse, and your qualifications as an ideal student.

Create a thoughtful road map

Create and use your CV thoughtfully. Make sure it's up-to-date and accurate and that it addresses professional achievements. It's a road map of your life's journey as a nurse, and beyond. (See *Road map to using your CV*.) It not only should represent your professional skills and expertise, but also should demonstrate what you've given back to the profession, patients, and society. ★

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