

A translator's CV – a translator's best friend

by

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Abstract:

Identity : name, address, phone number, photograph

No-nos

Comment

Author

Part 1: Identity

Whether you use the French *résumé* or the older Latin *curriculum vitae*, now fashionably abbreviated to *CV*, there is one tool in the translator's backpack which is indispensable nowadays, and that tool is the professional summary of your background, education and experience.

Whether you wish to *summarise* your life as the French word would suggest, or tell the world of the exciting *course of your life* as the Roman tongue would imply, there is one salient and very clear fact – not everybody knows you - and the logical corollary to that fact is that you will need to tell others about yourself from time to time.

While your *CV* must cover, at a minimum, four essential aspects of your life namely your *identity*, *work history*, *education*, and *skills*, a lot more can be added, and an even greater amount of items can be avoided entirely. There is only one way of writing your *CV* – the good way - and most definitely, there is a number of ways in which your *CV* should never be presented.

This article deals only with *identity*, and further articles will deal with *work history*, *education* and *skills*.

I write these articles as one who has read and perused over ten thousand *CVs* in the past number of years from translators as a director of InfoMarex, my own translation agency, and as a part of InfoMarex's requirement to provide a *CV* on registering with my firm. I would like to share a number of the findings of my experience.

You will find that these articles do not attempt to cover **all** the theoretical aspects of what a *CV* could include – eight million links suggested by

Google will do that, but rather the manner and inclusion of the things the CV must have and the many things a good CV must not.

Your name

Your CV should start with your name. This may sound obvious, but a considerable number of CVs do not, and some do not even show the translator's name at all, neither at beginning nor end, expecting the reader to pick it up from other accompanying correspondence.

There a modern helpful usage of putting the surname or family name in capital letters: Michael John SMITH. This eliminates possibilities of confusion where, in cases like Thomas Jordan, the name could be read either way. It is most helpful in the case of foreign names, where Bin Li reveals neither first nor family names or worse still conceals the sex of the individual.

On a humorous note, I dealt for years with a translator whom I thought was male, only to discover after five years that "he" was a "she". While I was embarrassed, she was only amused.

The "official" InfoMarex mode of address is now a direct and simple "John, Jack, Mary, Liz" with no previous adjective which might, in some languages, require declining or genderisation.

If your official name is different to what you are known by, do use the modern convention of brackets John (Jack) SMITH. It helps recognition when personal contact is being made that parents and siblings quickly recognise their own Jack the lad, and one is not told that "no John Smith lives here. Oh, hold on. You mean Jack".

Your name should be in its short version. This particularly applies to non-English names where nicknames are commonly used. Take for example the beautiful José de Jesús Martínez Gómez de Uribe Blanco, where one finds the individual is known to all and sundry as "Pepe URIBE". Similarly with a delightful Maria Susana Rocha da Costa Figueredo da Oliveira, but known as "Suzi OLIVEIRA".

Two or even three initials in names should not be used unless one is an academic. The name John M.T.J. SMITH implies a solid posting at a university and outside that context, it looks pretentious. Avail yourself of Occham's Razor. Don't multiply the unnecessary and use but one initial, if at all.

Your address

It is astonishing that many CV writers do not include their address in their *résumé*.

A full postal address - at a minimum, a Post Office box - is needed in a CV, e.g.

Mr. John SMITH, "The Beeches" 14 Main Street, Bigtown, MYCOUNTRY 4021	Mr. John SMITH, P.O. Box 21, Bigtown, MYCOUNTRY 4021
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If the writer does not wish to give a residential address, or if the country, as with certain Middle Eastern nations, does not use street addresses, that is fine.

A PO Box – sometimes called *general delivery* in North America or *poste restante* elsewhere - will suffice.

Quite apart from the client using international bank to bank facilities, it must be presumed that the translator would like to get a cheque in the post some day. Having to ask for an address, proves the point of its need.

The translator's postal address should **not** be embedded in the documents headers, footers, footnotes, endnotes, boxes or comments, but rather as a part of the regular CV, for the simple reason that frequently most documents are now Internet transmitted ones where a "copy and paste" function is frequently used which an embedded feature denies at a first attempt.

Why make it difficult for a client to either send you either business or a cheque is, at times, a thought which does not seem to cross some translators minds?

Your address should be as it would appear on an envelope in the normal format of your country.

Mr. Guido d'Arezzo, Pasha Bey Cad. 1/4 81570 Küçükalyi Istanbul – TURKEY	Sig. Guido d'Arezzo, via Garibaldi 32 25030 Castel Mella BRESCIA Italy
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Some nations follow the person's name with the city where they live and work *backwards* with the address.

Others put the city in CAPITALS preceded or followed by a postal or zip code with the county in small letters with only a title case. Sometimes, where they exist, the postal code comes to the side of the address, before the address or after a state address in federal systems.

The translator's address must be according to local postal convention, and never on one single line in a CV. Such make no sense at all to either reader or postman.

Some conventions do not put commas at the end of address lines, others do. Some put commas after house numbers, others do not. Follow the local convention and do not confuse the local postman.

Translators more than any other profession will realise that what is patently clear at home is hopelessly unintelligible at the other side of the planet. Our profession has the underlying and basic purpose of bringing intelligence, *i.e.* understanding, into the minds of others, not confusion.

The translator should always write a CV address as if correspondence [or the proverbial cheque in the post] is to be received from abroad. The translator's CV is a tool which will circle the world and while "Montrose CO" is understandable to all in Colorado, it is essential to follow it on a CV with the zip code and the words "United States".

In summary, make it easy for the client or agency to contact you as a translator. A first failure to understand an address in a busy client work environment trying to allocate a job may simply lead to your CV being disregarded and the following one chosen.

Your phone number(s)

By this is meant telephone, fax, mobile, cell, and pager numbers, to say nothing of the new system which may have been invented yesterday of which this writer does not yet know.

Electronic communication is one of the fastest changing fields in modern technology. Use it to your advantage as a translator and do not let it put you at a disadvantage.

Your telephone number should be of an internationally recognised format and written on the lines of “Tel. +353 (0)1 627 1249 Ø”. In this telephone number, seven things have been indicated:

- first and foremost that the number is in fact a telephone number having the abbreviation “Tel.” before it. It is therefore not a “Fax” or a joint “Tel/Fax” number;
- secondly, it indicates that in an international dialling situation, the now universally recognised convention or sign “+” will be replaced by the local code to get an international line, e.g. 00, 1, 91, or 9, etc.;
- thirdly, it indicates that what comes after the “+” sign is the international code of the country being dialled;
- fourthly, it shows that for a dialling situation within the country itself, the caller will dial “01” and then the local number, but not in the local exchange area;
- fifthly, it indicates that if the call is from outside the country, the national code is reduced to from “(0)1” to a simple “1”;
- sixthly, it indicates the actual telephone number as being the last set or sets of numbers;
- seventhly, the symbol Ø indicates that there is an automatic answering machine attached to the number.

If local convention uses hyphens between numbers or full stops e.g. 202-456-1414 or 202.456.1414, then use them as an extra assistance to those who are not familiar with your country’s numbering system.

A telephone number given simply as 2024561414 makes no sense at all. It is without set or sequence. It is also very difficult to read for dialling purposes without making a mistake.

Our American and Canadian cousins – as indeed a number of other nations – have long standardised their phone systems very sensibly at an international eleven (11) digit format, *e.g.* +1 202 456 1414 where, after the international code, the first set of three numbers is the local area code, and the last seven always in a sequence of three and four [not four and three, nor in three twos and a one] is the local number itself.

The points raised above apply equally to fax, mobile/cell and pager numbers. Our German cousins now refer to their mobile as “ein Handy” which tells you precisely what communication should be all about!

The purpose of your communication device is for you as a translator to be easily contacted or contactable. Make it easy for yourself by making it easy for others.

Your photograph

Your CV should contain a passport sized recent photo in which you are looking straight at the camera. Avoid cap and gown photos or one containing pets. A poor translation raises the suspicion that it was done without the assistance of a dictionary but with the assistance of the cat!

As an improperly sized photo can increase the recommended size of your CV from 80K (kilobytes) to 1Mb (megabyte) in the click of a mouse, the translator will ensure that such does not occur, as clients dislike **intensely** large unwieldy CVs.

Your photo creates an identity in the client’s or agency’s mind where you look the part of being a sound, focussed and intelligent translator.

The second advantage of a photo is that it reveals, or rather, confirms the sex of the translator. In many countries, it is either legally forbidden to ask about the sex of a potential employee on grounds of sex discrimination, or is simply politically or culturally incorrect to do so.

Inadvertently many translators do not indicate or offer a hint as to their sex in their CVs by omitting to put a prefix, *e.g.* Mr, Ms or Mrs before their name. The client or agency therefore has to dance around the issue when the translator is employed, as a matter of sheer courtesy if nothing else, until the matter becomes clear. This is also the case where a title is given *e.g.* Dr (or Prof) Goedele Laurent SMIT.

Where physical employment takes place, one of course immediately recognises the sex of the person. But as the bulk of freelance translation is nowadays by eMail and over the Internet, this becomes impossible, and frequently as with a small percentage of thousands of translators, embarrassing.

It is to be noted, as an InfoMarex database statistic, that three out of four North American translators do not include a photo in their CV, while three out of four Europeans and Asians do. There is no immediate tangible reason to hand, whether this is because of any particular policy or not or whether there is a colour, race or sex element involved.

While a photo is not essential to a CV, like a picture, it is worth a thousand words.

No-nos

A number of items, in matters of identity, should **never** appear in a CV, principally your passport number, your tax number(s), your military service number, your social security/welfare number, or any similar federal, national, local number or identity code.

Such matters are of absolutely no professional interest to a client or an agency, nor indeed your parents' names. Nor should a CV ever mention the translator's religion, political party affiliation, sexual orientation, compliance with compulsory military service, or marital status or lack thereof in any of the aforementioned. The use of Mrs or Mme is no longer an indication of marital status but a cultural convention.

A client may well pick up that the translator is of a particular religion or political persuasion from the translator's work history, but this is neither requested nor needed by clients unless there is a particular religious or political dimension to the translation project in hand where such knowledge will come in useful.

Your bank account details should **NEVER** be given in an open CV but only on your invoice when work has been completed for a client or agency which is going to transfer directly the import of your invoice to your bank account.

Comments

Agreement or disagreement with any of the above, can be registered by sending an eMail to comments@infomarex.com which the author of this article will attempt to sort, compile and answer when the series of articles is complete.

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