

Resume Writing Tips and Strategies

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Keep It Focused and Businesslike

A resume should be specific and all business. Don't try to be too smart or too cute. After all, you are asking an employer to invest significant time and money by choosing you over many other similarly qualified people. Employers mainly want to know whether you are appropriately qualified and experienced, and if you have the ability to "deliver the goods."

More Than Two Pages Is Too Much



For students, recent graduates, or people with just a few years of experience, try to keep your resume to one page, two as an absolute maximum. Even a resume for someone with 20 years or more of extensive working experience, should not exceed three pages. In some cases, one or two "optional" pages can be referred to as "available upon request." These would be such optional annexes as a list of references or an inventory of recent projects and/or publications.

Get The Words and Punctuation Right

Make sure the grammar, spelling, and punctuation in your resume are perfect. Any obvious mistakes will hurt your credibility. Also, be sure to keep the language clear and simple. If you draft it yourself, have someone with excellent writing skills do an editorial review and a careful proofread of it. If a professional prepares it for you, such reviews are the responsibility of the resume preparation firm. Use an accepted English language "style guide" if you want to be sure of the finer points of word usage, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, etc.

Read Between The Lines

Customize the resume to match the stated requirements of the job that you are applying for, without being

misleading. Review and analyze the job advertisement carefully. Look for and itemize the key qualifications, skills, and abilities the employer is seeking. Then identify certain key words that are usually repeated in such ads. Make sure that the wording and sequence of points in your resume reflect and address these "corporate terminologies" and "code words" as much as possible. When possible, study the company's annual report and Web site, and weave the themes and terms found there into your resume and cover letter.

Make Sure It Looks Good

Use a crisp, clean, simple presentation format for a professional looking resume. Just a bit of simple line work and/or shading, done with standard word processing software will do the trick. If you don't have the aptitude for this, there is most likely someone among your friends or in your office who can help you achieve a professional presentation. If not, seek professional advice. It won't cost much for a good simple layout, but it will make a world of difference to the product.

Show What You Can Do Today

Focus, first and foremost, on your recent experience that is most relevant to the position at hand. Less relevant and/or dated experience should be either eliminated or summarized in brief point form near the end of your resume. When reviewing your resume information, a prospective employer wants to know what you are doing now, what you have done recently, and how that relates to the job requirements of the post they are trying to fill.

Be A Straight-Shooter

Be completely honest. When people lie or "creatively exaggerate" on their resume, they are almost invariably exposed, sooner or later. Think about it - who really wants to get a job based on a lie(s) and then have to live in fear of eventually being found out? We often read in the newspaper about high-profile folks who get caught in some falsehood or exaggeration, and it isn't very pretty.

Follow The Instructions

Submit your resume in exactly the form that the prospective employer requests. If they say e-mail or fax is okay, do it that way. However, if they ask for it by regular mail, send it the way they ask. They must have reasons for requesting it in such a form and they are geared up to process it that way. If your resume is to be sent by snail mail, use the complete address that they specify, or it could go to the wrong office, especially in a large organization.

Don't Get Lost In The Mail

Be careful to respect certain conventions that the potential employer may require in your resume. For example, make sure that the cover letter mentions the exact name of the specific position you are applying for, and the competition number, if applicable. Sometimes an employer will request that the job title and/or number be printed on the outside of the envelope. You would not want to miss out on a job because you didn't follow minor administrative requirements.

Keep The Cover Short and Focused

In the cover letter, don't repeat what is already detailed in the body of the attached resume. It is a "cover" letter. It should be short and to the point. Introduce yourself first, and then briefly summarize why you believe that you have the qualifications and experience to fulfill the duties of the position better than anyone else. Express enthusiasm about the job and the company. Close by stating how you are looking forward to hearing more from them soon, and that you will follow-up if necessary.