



Re "Vitalize" your Resume'

By Jane Andersen

As a Human Resource Director, Corporate Recruiter, College Recruiter and Talent Development Manager, I've come across thousands of resume's in my life. Some have been "eye" catching and creative, other's have been un-memorable and ho-hum. In today's economic climate, more than ever, the Resume' is the most critical tool to have "well" done. It won't get you a new job, you've got to do that with a dynamic interview, showcasing your abilities, talents and skills, but the Resume' will be the tool that gets you "noticed". Hopefully in a positive way and may, if it captures what the recruiter/hiring manager is looking for, get you an interview.

Here are some helpful tips when constructing your resume':

1. You need to create a "boilerplate" or generic resume' that is your "foundation" piece.

*After creating this resume' capturing all your achievements, accomplishments, value/positioning statement and job experiences, it's time to use this resume' as your Jumping off mark for "tailoring" each resume' you submit on-line or directly sending to the hiring manager. (It's always a good rule of thumb to update your resume periodically, as it helps keep your resume' current and reduces stress and work for you when you really need it.) **REMEMBER, you want your resume' to be memorable and a great "match" for the position you are applying for, therefore, the wording, the experiences, the key accomplishments and achievements must be tailored and written in a way that tells the hiring manager/recruiter that you are a perfect fit!** Employers are also using "key" word search packages that will scan your on-line resume for those words. If they don't find those words, or enough of them, your resume' goes into the reject pile. You may receive an on-line rejection letter, or you may never hear back. So what does this mean for you? You must research the job you're applying for, pick up key words from the job description, Google the job for more information, talk with colleagues in other similar industries and companies that either have done this work or know what it involves. Then "tailor" your resume' to match the position as well as possible. **BUT NEVER LIE** or tell any Falsehood. The recruiter will inevitably ask you questions, and if you've exaggerated your achievements or embellished your experience, they will know it and you're out of there!*

2. Age. *If you're in your mid 40's, 50's or 60's, please don't let us know that with your resume'. We know that you will want to expand on your experience, but don't state that you have over 25 years experience doing something. It will only "date" you, so don't go there. Better to state your achievements with a simple active verb and use numbers to describe results, # of people managed, or quantitative improvements. Never tell me your date of birth on your resume, or the year you graduated from college, high school, etc. I just want to know that you did. Key: Try to eliminate the word "experience" from your resume' and instead emphasize capabilities, competencies, core qualities, achievements, accomplishments, results, not previous titles, duties and length of service.*

3. General Format. *Resume's should not exceed two pages for most occupations, though professionals and educators require longer curricula vitae or bio's. Prepare your resume' in a standard word-processing application, such as Microsoft Word, using a traditional, easily read font, such as Arial or Times New Roman. Keep the text in a uniform font size of 10, 11 or 12. Your name, section headings, and employers' names can be in a bold and in a somewhat larger font, perhaps 12 or 13. Avoid multiple fonts and excessive bolding, italics, caps, and underlining.*

The preferred style for most Job Seekers combines a functional, qualification-based format and a traditional, chronological work history.

4. Keywords. *Don't forget to research the Job Description you're applying for and use "key" words.*

5. Language. *Choose action verbs, that convey activity, energy, achievement. Clear description of contributions and achievements will bring vitality and strength to your resume'. Use contemporary expressions and technical wording, particularly language related to computer skills and knowledge...but don't overdo it with too many words that "muddy" your achievements. Double check your resume' for errors, and have another person read it for errors and flow. It's amazing what another set of eyes will catch.*

6. Construction.

Heading and Contact Information.

Always center your Name on the page. (Somewhat larger font). NEVER put your picture or use special graphics in a resume'...save this for a brochure. Under your name detail your contact information: address, phone (cell phone first if this is the number you want them to use), email. When giving out your email, make sure it sounds professional and businesslike, nothing that would be a turn-off, crude language or too cutesy. (I think you know what I mean.) If your resume' has multiple pages, put your name and the page number at the top of each page.

Job Position, Profile and Positioning Statement.

*The first section of the resume' is the Job Position you are qualified for and are applying for. Immediately below that position or functional title is your chance to "Profile" yourself and construct a brief positioning statement on your qualifications which tells the recruiter/hiring manager that you have the experience and skills to handle that job. **These statements usually include the key job responsibilities of that position, but don't forget to use active verbs when describing your position. This is where you start to create "value" in the hiring managers mind.** This section was called the Objective Statement. If you are returning to the workforce following an absence, explicitly state this in this section, turning your positioning/value statement into an objective of what you specifically want to do/accomplish.*

Skills, Capabilities, Competencies, Achievements

*Present your critical or transferable skills, capabilities, and competencies in summary format, bulleted. Limit yourself to the 10 - 15 most important factors. You can tailor these factors to the position sought. Label this section Key Achievements/Skills or Core Competencies/Capabilities...stay away from the word "qualifications"...it will date you, even though that's what they are. This section can include specific knowledge (technical) certifications and credentials. (Don't forget to include computer expertise in this section. You would be surprised at how many employers desire an associate that knows the complete suite of Microsoft products and have their Microsoft certifications.) This section can also include specific attributes that are job related (leadership, coaching, mentorship) that have an orientation toward a particular result. **Include Value Statements that tell what you did and the result or value to the company. i.e. Drove 3 product launches throughout North America that contributed to a 20% increase in revenue for that year.***

Professional Experience/ Work History

In reverse-chronological order, list each employer (account for the most recent 10 to 20 years) including the employer's name, a description for the enterprise, the city and state where you had the job, calendar years of employment (you don't need to include months), the most senior job title achieved, accountabilities, primary activities, and achievements or notable results. You can place the achievements and notable results in a bulleted list, but limit them to 3 or 4. Remember to bullet special achievements and accomplishments for each position, but don't be redundant. The hiring manager does not want to read the same accomplishment 4 times.

The remaining positions or jobs you've held can be consolidated into a brief, general paragraph, such as "previous positions". This paragraph should be short, concise, and active. Remember to key in on special accomplishments, even if this was 25 years ago.

Education, Training and Affiliations

Enter formal education, including the name of your school, its location, and your course of study. You don't need to put a graduation date unless it has been within the past 10 years. If you did not complete a degree program from the school, note either "attended" or "completed coursework". Formal education is often checked during background inquiries, and any misrepresentation is likely to be discovered.

List any meaningful training in bullets. This includes recognized, rigorous, and relevant programs with a direct bearing on your occupational position statement. Don't use this space for seminars attended that did not produce certifications.

Occupational affiliations or special certifications can also go here. List memberships in any associations relevant to your employment. (If you held positions in these organizations of consequence, list them...just don't say you were a member like everyone else does.)

What NOT to put in

Don't put in any personal or family information. We don't care if you've been married 40 years to the same person....although we salute you for endurance and patience. If something you've accomplished in your personal life has a direct correlation to the work you'll be performing, i.e., girl scout or boy scout leader...then you may want to include it to show these particular skills.

Do not include references or even mention their availability; that step comes much later in the process. Do not include Photos, Colors, Scented Stationary, Graphic Art, or Colored Ink.

7. Submitting Your Resume'

Most On-line services, whether it's a Job Board, Employer or Special Job Bank, will require a certain text format. Please be advised that it is important to prepare your resume' in an On-line format as well as a Presentation Format. You can include Cover Letters on-line, but, again it is a good idea to get counsel before attaching a Cover Letter. Always keep track of who you sent your resume' to and for what position. It is also a good idea to keep a record of the date you sent your resume' (was it sent on-line or through the mail) and did you indicate you would follow-up? If so, do follow-up when you said you would. This will be a plus in your favor, because many hiring managers are swamped with resume's. The candidate that does what he/she says they will do will get a second look.

8. Cover Letters

There are many different thoughts concerning the addition of a Cover Letter. Please ask for advice on this topic from a person in the business or call our office for advice. How they are written, what is said, and the length are all important. Most employers will look at the cover letter as a way to see if you can write, in a clear and concise manner, and that you indeed desire and have the qualifications for the position being advertised.

For more information on this Topic and other Career Transition Tools and Resources, please go to www.CompassConsultingTeam.com or email us at info@compassconsultingteam.com

FINAL THOUGHTS ABOUT RESUME'S:

1. Go easy on the eyes. *A resume that's difficult to read will likely remain unread. So, invite your reader to quickly and easily learn of your qualifications with a well-designed document. Don't be afraid to "headline" your resume, sparingly and with strategy. Bold, underline, and centering of words and phrases to help guide your reader to what you want them to read. Resist the urge to overload the page with text. Bullet where appropriate and if you have to use paragraphs, limit them to 3 to 4 lines.*

2. Be Crystal Clear. *Does your resume have a strategy? Can someone reading it tell exactly what position you are pursuing? A powerful resume has a clear focus and showcases only experiences and accomplishments relevant to that focus.*

3. Profiling. *Just below your name and contact information, your resume should feature a profile - a powerfully-written, promotionally-driven, attention-grabbing summary of competencies and capabilities that showcase the unique value you bring to a company. It should make your job focus crystal clear and spotlight achievements and expertise relevant to that focus. Above all, it should compel an employer to read on to the Experience section, where the claims made in your Profile will be supported with specific information.*

*Hiring managers tend to focus on the top third of the first page of the resume. They may only read on if your profile grasps their attention quickly. Communicate your value add in the profile section. **LIST powerful and consistent examples of how you help the companies you support make money, save money, save time, grow the business and maintain the business.***

4. Key words. Key words are an important tool for recruiters and hiring managers. They scan for key words and phrases that describe specific skills and areas of expertise in order to filter resumes that best match the criteria for the job they want to Fill. For your resume to survive this scanning process, include key words throughout that reflect both the needs of the position you are pursuing and the skills you possess.

5. Tell a Story. Guide your reader through your background, illuminating the reasons for your movement from one position to another and describing the challenges you faced when landing each job. Challenges told that reflect your accomplishments, i.e., turning around a failing project, reflect positively on you and should be described.

6. AMP it UP! In your experience section make sure you don't just copy your prior job descriptions. Besides noting your job positions and key accomplishments, make sure you explain, briefly, the significance of what you did. Use PAR: state the **problem** or situation you found yourself in, the **Action** (s) you and your team took, and the end **Result** in quantifiable and qualifiable terms. Don't forget to use powerful action verbs when detailing your accomplishments, i.e., orchestrated, pioneered, leveraged, spearheaded, etc.

7. Don't be afraid to brag. Be sure to include any special training, speaking engagements or community activities that are pertinent to the job you are seeking. Do you have special technology or industry -specific skills? Have you attended any seminars, gained any certifications, or executed a special project through volunteer or professional association work? Please note them.