



## SELLING THE SIZZLE...CREATING A RESUME THAT GETS AN INTERVIEW

### Do I Need a Resume?

So, you think your job history is too limited to warrant a resume. Or maybe you feel like all your jobs have been pretty common, and you haven't got much to say in a resume anyway. Think again! No level of experience is too limited or past assignment too ordinary to warrant not using a resume!

Competition for jobs at all levels is fierce, and you need every advantage you can get to help you stand out from the crowd. A clear, concise resume that highlights your strengths and accomplishments as well as your education and experience can be one of the most powerful weapons in your job-search arsenal. Don't be intimidated by the thought of preparing one. A resume is simply a tool designed to help you with the coveted prize: an interview.

### First Impressions Count

When you apply for any position today, your resume is likely just one of dozens, or even hundreds, of others. Standing out in the crowd is tough, especially considering that you've only got about 20 seconds to make a good impression. That's right... the average time a manager takes to scan a resume and determine interest in an applicant is a whopping 20 seconds. You've spent thousands on an education and training and you now have just a few seconds to sell yourself to a prospective employer! That's why the materials you use to market yourself must project a compelling message and professional image. Your resume must make the reader want to meet you and ask "How did you accomplish that?"

### Selling the SIZZLE

A common mistake in preparing a resume is to detail duties and responsibilities instead of highlighting your accomplishments. In the advertising world, this is the equivalent of selling the steak instead of the sizzle, a marketing error that could cost you an important interview.

### It's Not Who You Are; It's What You've Done

A potential employer has only a secondary interest in the duties and responsibilities you performed in a previous job. So what if you sold widgets to the aerospace industry; or were the senior accountant in a candy factory; or even the Vice President of Marketing for a furniture



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company? Titles and duties say nothing about who you are or what you can bring to this new employer that is unique and worthy of consideration.

On the other hand, if your resume shows that you increased widget sales by 20% or discovered accounting errors that saved \$50,000, or designed a new production system that resulted in a \$200,000 annual savings in material costs, you can bet results like that will pique the interest of an interviewer.

Your accomplishments need not be dramatic, but they should always showcase the impact your basic duties and responsibilities have had. The best way to do this is to quantify results, by adding numbers and/or percentages whenever possible. Ask yourself things like:

- How many payroll checks involving how much money did you issue each week?

- How much time and/or money did your new procedure save the company?
  - How large a budget did you manage?
  - By what percentage or dollar amount did you increase sales?
- Asking yourself questions like this gives your professional achievements weight—the sought-after “sizzle” you need to make an impact!

### Resume Do's and Don'ts

As you prepare your resume, there are a number of things you want to be sure you do; there are also a few pitfalls you'll want to avoid:

#### DO'S

- Make your resume easy to read.
- Use an easy-to-read font (i.e. Times New Roman), 10-point or larger.
- Use short phrases rather than sentences.
- Keep it short. One to two pages is ideal; managers don't have time to read any more than that.

- Start with a bang. Capture readers' attention right away by including a brief summary of your qualifications. By concisely showcasing your strongest skills and accomplishments right at the top of your resume, you'll stand out as the hiring manager plows through dozens of other candidates' resumes.
- Speak to the requirements of the position you are applying for; prune anything that isn't related to the specific job.
- Stress your past accomplishments and the skills you used to get the desired results. Quantify results whenever possible.
- Use Keywords. Many companies use technology to scan resumes looking for keywords relevant to the job you seek. Try to use the exact phrases and specific applications listed in the job description. This will increase the number of hits your resume generates in the initial screening process and improve your



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chances of being invited for an interview.

- DO sweat the small stuff. Just one typographical error can remove you from consideration for a job. Have one or more people proof your resume for spelling, grammar and typographical errors.
- Follow the instructions included in the position description when submitting your resume. If it calls for resumes to be emailed, then submit yours that way. Either send the resume as an attachment or paste your resume into the body of an email, ensuring it is formatted in such a way that it can be read from on any computer system.
- If you are printing your resume, print on quality resume paper. You can buy it at any of your local office supply stores.

#### **DON'TS**

- Don't stretch the truth. The real truth can quickly emerge through even the most basic reference

or background check and the consequences can be serious. Simply don't do it.

- Never include your salary history or reasons for leaving a previous job.
- Don't include personal references on your resume. A potential employer is only interested in references after they are seriously considering hiring you. You can enthusiastically agree to provide reference information at that time.
- Don't use personal pronouns (e.g. "I," "my," "me"). Concise bullet points without unnecessary words are best.
- Avoid referring to hobbies and activities that are not business related or don't apply to your career goals. In addition, don't include personal information such as age and marital status on your resume.
- Don't rely on spell check to catch typos.
- Don't include a photograph of yourself. You may bear a resemblance to someone the

reader doesn't like.

- Don't use overly fancy formatting or colored paper to attract attention to your resume. Fancy formatting doesn't transfer well via email and you may even be viewed as unprofessional. Remember, your accomplishments are the "sizzle" that will stand out the most.
- Don't just send your resume off and hope for the best. If you don't hear from the company in a couple of weeks, follow up with an email or a phone call. This demonstrates initiative, reinforces your interest in the position and may prompt the hiring manager to give your resume a second look.
- And finally, don't expect miracles from your resume. YOU hold the "sizzle-factor" in your skills and experience. Employers hire people; not resumes.



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## ACTION VERBS!

Use them! They can make the difference between a statement that attracts attention and one that seems commonplace and uninteresting. Here are a few of my personal favorites for you to incorporate:

accomplished	established	managed	setup
achieved	evaluated	motivated	simplified
added	expanded	negotiated	solved
broadened	facilitated	organized	streamlined
communicated	generated	participated	strengthened
completed	guided	performed	succeeded
conducted	identified	persuaded	supervised
consolidated	implemented	planned	taught
coordinated	improved	produced	trained
created	increased	promoted	transformed
designed	initiated	reduced	updated
developed	launched	reorganized	utilized
directed	led	revised	verified
eliminated	maintained	selected	wrote



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