

## Resume Critique

There is no such thing as the 'perfect resume'. True, some are better than others, however, your goal should be to make yours the best it can be without falling into the common traps that people in my industry commonly see repeated over and over again by job seekers.

### Fundamentals:

Like everything else in the business world there are fundamentals assigned to good solid resume writing which deserve a mention here. First of all the resume is a fingerprint of who you are and should be written in the 3rd person (past tense). Carefully review the adjectives you use to describe yourself and your skills. Be conservative, understated is better than grandiose. Drop the ridiculous email address if you have one. Make sure your last name appears somewhere in your email address and keep it professional. Be sure to have your email address, home phone number and cell phone number on your resume. Don't worry about privacy, people may want to get in touch with you so make it easy for them. Finally, avoid bold, italics, and underlining inside your resume. If you feel you must stylize, do so sparingly. Finally, list all employment dates as accurately as possible, using month and year format and don't forget to list the city and state of the employers.

A quick note on bullets: I personally like bullets for ease of reading, however, bullets are supposed to be used to draw attention to your most important and notable accomplishments. Theoretically, if you put your entire job description into bullets, you've negated their purpose. Be prudent in your use of bullets and make sure your resume flows well.

### Content:

Be careful not to undersell yourself! Airing the right message throughout your resume is key. Avoid task-based descriptions and try for results-based, achievement-oriented descriptions. Employers are looking for results. They want to know you have solved problems similar to theirs and that you achieved the results for which they are looking. Remember the ultimate point of an impressive resume: to highlight the talent and drive only YOU can bring to the table. Submitting your resume in poor condition is like saying 'I can do what some other people in your pile can do, but I think you should hire me over them anyway'. What it needs to convey is 'I have done what other people have done, but I've done it better and yielded more impressive results. I am an asset. Hire me and I'll bring my talents to your company'.

### Language:

If you aren't communicating your job descriptions, accomplishments, and other aspects of your work experience well in your resume, hiring managers will assume you are not a good communicator in person. Don't be fooled by this. Don't let your use of language hold you back. Try to avoid 'worked with' or 'managed' these terms are over used and not powerful verbs phrases and they are too task oriented, procedural, and boring.

Look for action verbs that are going to create excitement and make sure you follow them up with details. Communication ability ultimately has the largest impact on your overall on-the-

job performance, and therefore, your odds of retention and your promotion potential once hired. That being said, your resume is the only and most crucial tool you have with potential employers. The person reading your resume should be able to understand 'what you do', 'how you do it' and what makes you 'more proficient' than someone else.

### **Format & Design:**

Honestly, a compelling design will get you noticed. Good formatting and design is crucial. Recruiters and hiring managers will look for any reason to put your resume in the 'NO' pile. We highly recommend that you use a Summary or Professional Profile rather than an Objective and that you follow it with a Core Competencies or Areas of Expertise section then go right to your Experience section. Again, make certain all titles are legitimate, employer addresses and dates of employment are complete. Education, certificates etc., should appear at the end of the resume.

### **Length:**

Your resume should be as long as it needs to be to adequately describe your responsibilities. Forget the notion of a one-page resume. It's a myth and not a professional approach to resume preparation.

### **Hobbies & Interests:**

Personally I find the listing of Hobbies & Interests on the resume completely distracting and a waste of time, if, however, you feel compelled to list them be conservative.

### **References:**

References and third party endorsements should not appear directly on your resume. They can be attached as an addendum, however, it is better to wait for the prospective employer to ask for your references. Speaking of references, your reference list should include previous supervisors, NOT co-workers, neighbors and friends. When an employment professional conducts a reference check it will delve into the specifics of your ability to handle pressure, specific knowledge and technical skills, your delivery and performance, your ability to handle politics, your demeanor, strengths and weaknesses.

## General Resume Writing Tips

List your technical knowledge first, in an organized way. Your technical strengths must stand out clearly at the beginning of your resume. Ultimately, your resume is going to be read by a thoughtful human being, but before it gets to that point it often has to be categorized by an administrative clerk, and make its way past various sorts of key word searches. Therefore, you should list as many directly relevant buzz words as you can which reflect your knowledge and experience. List all operating systems and UNIX flavors you know. List all programming languages and platforms with which you're experienced. List all software you are skilled with. Make it obvious at a glance where your strengths lie - whether the glance is from a hiring manager, a clerk, or a machine.

List your qualifications in order of relevance, from most to least. Only list your degree and educational qualifications first if they are truly relevant to the job for which you are applying. If you've already done what you want to do in a new job, by all means, list it first, even if it wasn't your most recent job. That said, chronological ordering of your experience (latest jobs first) is the preferred format.

Quantify your experience wherever possible. Cite numerical figures, such as monetary budgets/funds saved, time periods/efficiency improved, lines of code written/debugged, numbers of machines administered/fixed, etc. which demonstrate progress or accomplishments due directly to your work.

Begin sentences with action verbs. Portray yourself as someone who is active, uses their brain, and gets things done. Stick with the past tense, even for descriptions of currently held positions, to avoid confusion.

Don't sell yourself short. This is by far the biggest mistake of all resumes, technical and otherwise. Your experiences are worthy for review by hiring managers. Treat your resume as your most important advertising and marketing device. Be sure to thoroughly "sell" yourself by highlighting all of your strengths. If you've got a valuable asset which doesn't seem to fit into any existing components of your resume, list it anyway as its own resume segment.

Be concise. As a rule of thumb, resumes reflecting five years or less experience should fit on one page. More extensive experience can justify usage of a second page. Consider three pages the absolute limit, reflecting experience of 15 years or more. Avoid lengthy descriptions of whole projects of which you were only a part. Consolidate action verbs where one task or responsibility encompasses other tasks and duties. Minimize usage of articles (the, an, a) and never use "I" or other pronouns to identify yourself.

Omit needless items. Leave all these things off your resume: social security number, marital status, health, citizenship, age, scholarships, irrelevant awards, irrelevant associations and memberships, irrelevant publications, irrelevant recreational activities, a second mailing address ("permanent address" is confusing and never used), references, reference of references ("available upon request"), travel history, previous pay rates, previous supervisor names, and components of your name which you really never use (i.e. middle names).

Have a trusted friend review your resume. Be sure to pick someone who is attentive to details, can effectively critique your writing, and will give an honest and objective opinion. Seriously consider their advice. Get a third and fourth opinion if you can.

Proofread, proofread, proofread! Be sure to catch all spelling errors, grammatical weaknesses, unusual or excessive punctuation, and inconsistent capitalizations. Proofread it numerous times over at least two days to allow a fresh eye to catch any hidden mistakes.