

# Resume Tips

I have seen resumes in every way, shape and form. Most resumes that people send me have typos, they're unprofessional or they have misspelled words. They just don't do a good job in representing that person. I'm going to take you through some basic tips on how to write a resume that will stand out.

## *Resume Tip #1: Resumes should be no longer than two pages*

The most critical part of your resume is the first half of the first page because resumes are read in seven seconds. That's it folks – seven seconds. So you want to write your resume so that when people read it they can glance at the most important items that you want them to see in that seven second time-frame.

Louise Kursmark, resume expert and my co-author, had this to say recently: “The trend that I'm seeing is toward shorter, crisper resumes. Even for senior executives, I seldom if ever produce more than two pages, and I make sure that all the material can be quickly absorbed in quick bites. When a resume is quickly viewed on a computer screen or a BlackBerry, it needs to instantly communicate key information. So I work hard to create a quick read with high impact.

## *Resume Tip #2: Most people will only read the first half of the first page*

If you have enticed them enough in that first half then they will probably want to read on. So what do you do in that first half of that first page?

Name and Contact Information: Well of course you put your name and contact information.

Target Opportunity or Industry: What I also like to do is put your targets. What are you targeting? Are you targeting strategic marketing? Are you a leader in strategic marketing? Put that on there—say that you're a strategic marketing manager or strategic marketing leader for example. Tell the reader what specifically you're looking for.

Key Competencies: Then you want to have what I call key words which are your greatest strengths, your key competencies or key words that you want the reader to glance at first. You can strategically put those words under your contact information centered in maybe two, three or four lines and you can italicize them and space between them. The reader's eye is going to go to those key words first and again, those key words are your greatest strengths.

So if you're a leader, than maybe one of your greatest strengths is leadership. What else are your key strengths? Are you a project manager? Do you do project management? Do you do contract negotiations? Are you good at research and planning? Come up with those key skills that you would envision using in that next opportunity and make those key words stand out.

Qualification Summary: You then want to have a short paragraph that summarizes your qualifications. The worst thing you can do with this paragraph is make it like a cookie cutter paragraph. For example, where you say you're a team player or you say those things that everyone else says on their resume. There is no way that your resume is going to stand out if you say exactly the same thing as everybody else.

You really need to think about those things that will grab the reader's attention for that paragraph. The paragraph should reflect who you are and what your particular strengths and focus are. Think about the things that your managers, your peers, and your employees would say about you or the things that really stand out in their minds about you.

Have you developed new programs to increase revenues by millions of dollars? Have you managed up to 300 people or budgets of up to millions of dollars? Put some of those things in this paragraph. Make it unique and different from everyone else's resume.

Other Key Information: I also like to include in that first half of that first page anything else that you might consider to be key for the reader to know. I wrote a resume recently for someone that wanted to get into a management role. So in that first half of that first page I created a little heading and called it *Leadership Highlights*. I included 3 or 4 bullets of things that this person did in a leadership role.

Now, she never held a leadership role in a paid position. So what?! She held many leadership roles in the community and in different organizations. She's got her advanced degree in marketing. She has an MBA and she held positions where she reported to high level executives such as CEO's, General Managers and Vice Presidents. So think about those things that build the case for what it is you're trying to sell, so to speak.

Think about other things you want to include in that first half of that first page. For example, if you're somebody that's in IT and you know software and hardware expertise is critical for the reader to know you have these skills then you may want to incorporate that information in the first half of the first page rather than having it be lost later on in the resume. So again, think about what you're trying to sell. What you want the reader to know about you and include it there.

*Career Highlights:* If you're not trying to sell leadership, for example, you might just do a heading and call it career highlights. I love to include career highlights, maybe 3 to 5 bullets of those things that you are most proud of. Career highlights can mean different things to different people. For example, I worked with a marketing executive of a shopping center. One of her career highlights was that she spent many times as an expert on Headline News and CNN talking about the holiday season, economics, what the shopping index was and those kinds of things. She did a lot of media appearances on major news networks. So that was a career highlight for her.

I also worked with a nuclear plant executive and one of his career highlights was that he headed up the first challenger disaster recovery. I've had some sales professional clients who received president's awards and they were in the top ten of their sales force or they brought in a huge deal. For other people it could be a speech that they've given, papers they've written, or degrees they've received. So just think about what those career highlights are for you and put them in that first half of that first page so that information doesn't get lost. Entice the reader to want to continue reading on.

### *Resume Tip #3: No Functional Resumes*

When you go into your experiences and achievements you will chronologically include company name and just the years. You don't need to put months and your position titles. I don't believe in functional resumes much anymore except in rare circumstances. Functional by the way, if you don't know the term functional resume, is where you write a resume by function as opposed to chronologically by date.

You may have a functional resume that includes marketing and sales skills and then project management skills and then training skills. The reason I don't like those types of resumes anymore is because I talk to recruiters all the time and they tell me that they don't like those resumes. They can't follow what a candidate has done over the course of their career. They want to know chronologically what somebody has done. They believe that functional resumes are written to hide information. I hear this all the time from recruiters so try and stay away from functional resumes.

### *Resume Tip #4: Include Accomplishment Stories and Results*

When you write your chronological resume, include a brief description, maybe a sentence or two, under each position and talk about your areas of responsibilities. Talk in terms of how many employees did you have, what was your territory, what were you responsible for? And then you should have maybe 3, 4 or 5 bullets under each position and the bullets need to be accomplishment stories.

Start off with an action verb, a very strong action verb—not for example, “coordinated” or “was part of a team”. But more like spear-headed, lead, developed, produced, created, and sold. Then talk about what you did and most importantly an end result. Every single bullet should include an end result whether you increased revenue, reduced costs, streamlined a process, or enhanced customer satisfaction. The difference between a good resume and a great resume is: good resumes list job tasks while great resumes list accomplishments and results. Keep that in mind.