

Resumes and Cover Letters

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It is an interesting fact to note that one of the most difficult tasks most people face in their professional lives is the preparation of a resume and cover letter. It transcends age, education and professional standing. I have seen some of the brightest and most successful people in their own right have extreme difficulty in writing a resume.

When preparing a resume, it is important to remember what a resume is and what its' primary function is - a document designed to describe ones' accomplishments and experience in a concise, clear manner, generating enough interest to culminate in the scheduling of an interview.

Simply put, a resume should provide enough information to pique the reader's interest, without giving away the whole story.

Please keep the following tips in mind when preparing your resume and cover letter:

A I D A

Since the primary function of a resume is to assist in marketing oneself, utilize the basic principle of marketing:

ATTENTION - Get the reader's attention in the first third of the page. If you do not "grab them" they WILL NOT READ ON

INTEREST - You must hold their interest.. specific facts and figures to back up opening statements are in order

DESIRE - By the end of the resume, the reader must have the desire to learn more about you, the candidate (product).

ACTION - The desire will culminate in the SCHEDULING OF AN INTERVIEW

Format

Name, Address and Telephone number should appear on top center of resume. (Be sure name appears on additional pages if used)

List an e-mail address if available (unless it is monitored by your employer)

Do not utilize first person "I," or third person "he" or "she". Instead, write in a narrative fact format i.e. "Consistently met or surpassed sales quotas"

Summary Vs. Objective

Most employers would prefer to see a brief summary of accomplishments and experience, as opposed to your objective. Remember, the employer wants to know what you can do for them. They are less concerned with what you want them to do for you.

Write in clear, concise sentences. Accentuate the positive. Describe your specific accomplishments.

Eliminate flowery or verbose language. Four brief sentences are far better than two long sentences.

Bullet Points read easier than long paragraphs

After summary, list work experience, working in reverse chronological order. List months and years of employment, employer's name and address, title and specific responsibilities and accomplishments.

Omit reasons for leaving and salary history.

Education is shown last, listing last highest degree attained, in reverse chronological order. No need to list high school or grade school (unless very prestigious).

Use a high quality WHITE bond paper with standard fonts. In today's computer world, many firms are now scanning resumes directly into the computer. Fancy Fonts in different sizes, caps, etc. and colors (paper & ink) are almost impossible to scan.

Spell check, grammar check, proofread and proofread again. After you have proofread, have someone else do it. Sometimes another set of eyes will pick up an error.

Use "buzz" words. This will make it easier for the recruiter and a computer to pick up on your specific experience.

NEVER EVER EVER LIE. Honesty is always the best policy.

Do not omit employers, degrees, titles or stretch dates of employment. It WILL come back to haunt you, and can result in termination from a position. Most recruiters and corporate Human Resources professionals are aware of all the tricks.

Omit personal information (sex, age, race, political affiliations, marital status, etc.) These are all illegal pre employment questions, Therefore, why volunteer the information?

Never put a picture on a resume.

Do not waste space on comments such as "Satisfactory References will be furnished upon request" I have yet to see a resume that read "I refuse to provide references, even if asked"!

Try to keep resumes to a maximum of one or two pages. If it is longer than that, it is almost guaranteed that it will not be read. If you have substantial experience that you feel is that important, consolidate it into a one or two page summary, and have a longer version ready to present AFTER the interview.

Put yourself in the prospective employer/recruiters' shoes. Ask yourself objectively "Would I want to interview me after reading this resume?".?"

RESUMES SHOULD INVITE QUESTIONS - NOT ANSWER ALL OF THEM

Cover letters should be brief and to the point- Indicate the specific position you are seeking, salary information, why you are qualified, and how you may be contacted.