

## The Art of Resume Writing

Why call it an art? Anyone can write a resume, can't they? The short answer to that question might be yes, anyone can write a resume. However, if you want your resume to stand out like a piece of artwork and get results then the answer to that question would be no, not anyone can write a resume.

The times we are living through are unusual and we all must do whatever is in our power to help ourselves. The job market today is extremely competitive and our resume is our initial introduction to potential employers. This simple piece of paper can make the difference between obtaining a face-to-face meeting or not. We cannot afford *not* to give it the proper attention that it deserves. Your resume is your personal marketing campaign – brand yourself properly so readers can understand your value. The following are a few guidelines to ensure that your resume gets positive results:

- ◆ Have someone review what you have written. Get a friend, relative or anyone you trust to look at what you have written and provide feedback. A second pair of eyes is always a good thing to catch mistakes you have overlooked and to get a fresh perspective. Many times I have seen words repeated over and over again because it is sometimes difficult to think of another way to word something. A fresh perspective may point out to you that your resume sounds repetitive and may also provide you with the words you were struggling for.
- ◆ Think about what unique skills and qualities you possess. Stay away from simply writing a job description. Let the reader see how you have made a difference to prior employers and what you can contribute to a potential employer. You may have taken the initiative to document an existing procedure for use by future employees or instituted the process of calling former customers to follow up with them. It is important to state that level of resourcefulness.
- ◆ Quantify your work. Wherever possible, use numbers to indicate what you accomplished, e. g., how much you saved the company, how you reduced turn-around time, how many issues you resolved, etc. For example, instead of stating that you managed a process, point out that you analyzed and modified the current procedures resulting in a reduction of customer complaints by 30%. Stating the number of calls you handled on an average day or how many customers you were responsible for provides a point of reference and portrays a clearer picture of who you are and what your capabilities are.
- ◆ Make your resume speak to recruiters *and* hiring managers. Even if your background is technical make sure that someone who is not technical can get an idea of what you have done. Often a recruiter does the first level screening and should get a sense of who you are aside from the technical details. It is not necessary to list in detail all the operating systems you ever worked with or all the products you have sold since that amount of detail can detract from your overall abilities and quite frankly, bore someone who does not need to know. It is okay

to attach an addendum to your resume, where and when appropriate, listing the technical aspects of your skills.

- ◆ Concise is nice! Make it easy for a hiring manager or recruiter to read. No one wants to be bogged down with extra detail about every specific job function you have ever performed or every form and type of software you have ever come across. Make it short and to the point. Short bullets summarizing your experience are sufficient. Lengthy paragraphs tend not to get read. Leave some things to discuss on the interview.
- ◆ Avoid typos! It may seem obvious, but check for words that may have been left out (spell-check won't catch those), misspelled or misused. Check and then double check by reading your resume backwards (literally last word first and then back up).
- ◆ Stay away from words that are not part of everyday conversation. If you misuse a word you won't appear as eloquent as you hoped. Additionally, make sure the words flow and do not make for difficult or "stumbling" reading material.
- ◆ Finishing touches. Finally, and perhaps as important as the substance of the resume, is its appearance. If a resume is not formatted correctly and is not pleasing to the eye it will leave a negative first impression, even before it is read. After you're all done with your resume, print it out and simply look at it, from an entirely aesthetic perspective, to make sure it looks properly formatted and "put together".

In the past, a resume may have been less significant; employers may have been more forgiving. However, when the number of qualified candidates far outweighs the number of open positions, recruiters and hiring managers need to use the resume as a screening device. Don't be screened out of that position because you didn't take the time to transform your resume into a piece of art!