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Resume Secrets Exposed

Gavin F. Redelman, RedStarResume



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Gavin F. Redelman

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Introduction

Welcome to Resume Secrets Exposed. This EBook has been written to provide you with as many tips and secrets to writing the perfect resume. Resume writing is an art form and in order to find a new job you must first be able to write a compelling resume that will stand out from the competition. While there is no exact science to writing the perfect resume, this EBook will provide you with as much information on what to include in the resume as well as avoiding the major resume mistakes that commonly lead to having your resume deleted.

Resume Secrets Exposed is the second book written by Gavin Redelman following up from his highly successful first EBook "Interview Secrets Exposed" an insider's view on how to ace the job interview!

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About the Author

Gavin Redelman is the founder of RedStarResume and known as a career strategist and master of "Achievement Based" resume writing. Recognised as an expert in the field of resume writing and also as a prolific blogger, Gavin has had articles published around the world in newspapers, journals, student and graduate publications, career websites and magazines.

With a love for what he does, Gavin and his team of writers are passionate about providing every customer with the ultimate first class-treatment and ensuring that their new resume will open doors and opportunities for their clients

The journey to finding your dream job starts with a brand new resume

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1 What is a Resume?

1.1 The Aim of the Resume

Before we seek to find out the real aim of the resume, we need to define exactly what the resume is. As per Wikipedia, "A resume is a document used by individuals to present their background and skillsets. Résumés can be used for a variety of reasons but most often to secure new employment." This basic definition is true to an extent as the resume is typically used to find a new job. However is preparing the resume as simple as presenting "their background and skillsets"? Is this enough to stand out from potentially hundreds of job seekers and get THE job?

There are so many aspects that make up a good resume and while a job seeker does need to present their background and skills, there are many other aspects that make up the perfect resume.

As a professional resume writer, I have broken down the three most important elements of preparing a professional resume. No matter if you're an entry level job seeker or a high flying executive, the same rules apply. This message will be continually emphasized throughout the entire EBook.

Target the Reader:

It does not matter how much you like your resume. The most important thing is the reader likes your resume. After all, the reader is the only person that you need to impress. Knowing your audience is imperative when writing your resume. If you are applying for a corporate role your resume needs to give off a corporate feel. Fancy fonts and colors should be changed to bullet points and headings. Alternatively a graphic designer resume can be more creative with their resume as the target audience is a creative audience. Before you apply for any job you need to take a step back and imagine that you are the hiring manager and ask yourself the question "Is this resume targeted towards the role that I am applying for?"

Presenting a Professional Image:

First impressions are everything when it comes to hiring. Think about this. Imagine that you are sitting at home and your brother or sister tells you that they are coming over to introduce you to one of their friends who you have never met before. As the doorbell rings, you open the door to meet this new person for the very first time. Now imagine that when you open the door the person is standing there with a big spaghetti stain right in the middle of his shirt. Before you even shake the persons hand or introduce yourself you have already created a first impression of this person. The same goes for your resume. If a hiring manager opens your resume and sees a "spaghetti stain" right in the middle of your resume they will have created a first impression before reading a single word. In the world of job seeking, creating a professional image and positive first impression is the first hurdle you need to pass on your way to a new job.

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Highlighting Achievements and the Value Added Skills:

There is a huge difference between an average resume, a good resume and a great resume. Typically, what makes a great resume is being able to identify your key achievements and the value added skills (tangible and intangible) that you can bring to your next job. Where most people fail with their resume writing is that they concentrate too much on their daily duties and responsibilities (For example "I did this on a daily basis") as opposed to creating more achievement statements which focus on how you have added value to the organization. Providing examples to back your statements up will give you an automatic edge over your competitors.

1.2 How Resumes Differ from Country to Country

Just how important is having a country-specific resume to your chances of getting employed? Can the resume that got you a job in the UK be used for the Australian job market? Do you really have to design a new resume depending on the country?

The answer is simple. Just as every resume and cover letter you write needs to be targeted and focused toward the company you are applying for, the same concept is applied toward the job market you are applying for. Different countries expect and require certain information to be present on resumes, and therefore it is critical that your new resume meets the unique requirements of that country.

Just because one country requires including personal details such as marital status or date of birth does not mean this standard applies to others. Not only can this be seen as inappropriate, it can also possible be illegal, and your resume will be deleted before it has even been read!

European requirements

Recently in Europe, the rules for resume writing changed substantially. As part of the European Union (EU), all members follow the same resume criteria and format. The Europass CV was created to "provide citizens with the opportunity to present in clear and comprehensive way information on their qualifications and competences".

This is a fantastic idea for people applying for roles in Europe as there is a standard template to complete that avoids issues such as cultural differences and different requirements between the countries.

While this may be good for a French national applying for a role in Belgium, the rules change when applying to countries such as the USA, Australia or Asia.

It is typical to see information such as nationality, date of birth and gender on European and Asian resumes.

In South Africa it is even required to have even further personal information such as ID number and ethnicity (the latter to clarify one's BEE or affirmative action status).

In Australia and the US, however, stricter privacy laws make this personal information unnecessary. In the US, an employer has no legal right to know your age. (They do have a right, however, to ask your age only if local, state, or federal law requires that employees be over a certain age.)

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USA differences

In today's society the terms "CV" and "resume" are often used interchangeably. Take note, however, if you are applying for a job in the USA, as there are major differences between a "resume" and a "CV".

An American Curriculum Vitae (CV) is NOT the same as a CV from countries around the world. What countries outside of the USA know as a "Curriculum Vitae" (or "CV") is called also called a "resume" in the US. A "Curriculum Vitae" in America is not a resume – it is a longer document and is usually written only by a researcher, educator, or academic.

Thinking of including a picture?

When it comes to putting a picture on your resume, different countries have different approaches. In the UK you would never attach a photo, whereas in Germany or France you would. Many Asian countries also include pictures with their applications. In the US and Australia it is not recommended or encouraged.

My personal opinion is to leave your picture off your resume. The most important aspect of your resume is the content and it's vital to ensure that the reader of your resume is more interested in your skills than what you look like.

With all the differences between resumes around the world, it's important that you do your research into the country before submitting your resume. A professional resume writer can often help you with the "dos" and "do nots" of resume writing in a certain country, and he or she can also provide assistance with resume format, structure and presentation.

With any resume (no matter where you are applying in the world), focus your content on achievements and value-added duties you have performed. At the end of the day, the employer wants to know how you can add value and what skills, experience and expertise you can bring to the business.

And finally, never embellish or fabricate achievements or qualifications. These will often be exposed sooner or later and can result in dismissal, expulsion or even criminal prosecution in those countries with punitive legal codes.

1.3 Is Your Resume Preventing You From Getting a New Job?

It seems that when people apply for jobs and don't receive job interview requests, they are quick to blame anyone or anything. I've heard job seekers tell me countless times that they applied for over 100 jobs online without receiving one single interview request. They tell me it's because of the current state of the economy or because the demand for jobs is far greater than the supply. While both of these reasons are true to an extent, companies are still interviewing and hiring. If you're someone who has applied to a large number of jobs but you haven't received a single interview request, it's probably time to start asking yourself those tough questions.

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Are you qualified enough?

Are your job expectations realistic that you can actually get the jobs you are applying for? Too many times people waste their own time applying for jobs that they are not suitable for. I recently worked with a young professional with 2 years of work experience and no managerial experience. In terms of salary he was earning the market value for a person with his skills and experience. For an entire month he applied for different managerial roles – all paying salaries of double what he was currently earning – and he couldn't understand why he wasn't able to land an interview. While it is important to aim high, it is equally as important to be realistic about your skills and experience.

If you're qualified for the job, is your resume letting you down?

You may have fantastic skills, experience and achievements. You may even be the best person for the job. If this is the case, why are you not getting interview requests?

When a hiring manager first picks up your resume, what they see and what they read will be the first impression they have about you. I recently worked with a candidate who just finished law school and was running into a similar problem. He was at the top of his class and as a recent graduate; he was now looking at beginning his career in one of the top law firms. Every job this candidate applied for was right for him. A recent law graduate seeking the best and brightest. The candidate sent his resume out to every law firm in the city and didn't receive one interview request. Even the smaller firms were not even giving him a chance.

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Here's what I saw when I took a brief look at his resume. The candidate had put his education and university roles on page 3 of the resume and had devoted the first 2 pages of the resume to the part-time jobs he had during high school and university. As such, by the time the hiring manager had read through page one of his high school work experience, the resume was being deleted before the most important part of the resume (his education) was even read. In today's society, reports suggest that a job candidate has 15-20 seconds to catch the reader's attention. By putting the most important information on the back page of the resume, the reader's attention was focused on aspects of the resume that were completely irrelevant for the candidate in getting the job.

1.4 10 Resume Writing Questions to ask a Professional Resume Writer

1) What do human resources professionals / employers want in a resume?

The most important part of a resume is the same no matter if you are a student or recent graduate or a CEO or executive. Recruiters and employers are looking for achievements and the value added skills you can bring to the job. Too many times a candidate will focus on the duties and responsibilities. While this is important it will not make a candidate stand out from the competition. Emphasizing achievements backed up with examples is the most important part of resume writing.

2) Can you give us examples about why some resumes are never read past the first sentence?

There is no set rule why a particular resume may be deleted however there are many factors that can contribute to a hiring manager pressing the delete button. What every candidate needs to remember is that for every job there is potentially another 100, 200 or even 300 other candidates applying for the job. Your resume is the first impression which a hiring manger will make about a particular candidate. Using fancy fonts, long sentences, bad spelling and grammar are just a few reasons why a resume will be deleted before the hiring manager has even completed the first sentences

3) How can you make your resume stand out?

Professionalism is the key and targeting the resume for the job you are applying for. Remember your resume has a purpose and that is to get you an interview. It is not a piece of artwork that will be hung on the wall. If the job you are applying for requires leadership abilities then provide examples about ways you have performed as a leader. Do not make the reader have to guess!

4) Can you offer some tips to create a resume that gets the interview.

Achievement based resumes!

5) In your experience, what are some of the mistakes that appear in resumes?

The top 5 resume mistakes I see on a daily basis are as follows:

- The use of "Text Messaging" abbreviations ("Going 2 c Clients)
- No Dates
- Lack of Achievements or highlights

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- Irrelevant information (Long Winded)
- Spelling mistakes

6) What do you think about including a "career objective" statement in your resume?

Career objective or career summary when written well adds great value to your resume. However when written badly or "generically" can have a negative effect on the resume. In my opinion I like to include a career summary to introduce the candidate to the reader. It is however very important to include value added information in the career objective rather than generic information such as "hard working individual who is very loyal and solve problems"

7) Can you give us an example of how a candidate can address gaps in their work continuity?

Always one of the hardest aspects of writing a resume is dealing with working gaps. A cover letter goes hand in hand with a resume and a well-constructed cover letter can explain to the reader why there is a gap. I recently worked with a senior executive who took 2 years off to travel and perform community work.

We included the community work on his resume to show the reader that he had been actively doing something over that certain time period and then was able to explain in the cover letter that after working nonstop for 20 years he took a 2 year break from his professional career in order to perform the community work which he had not been able to do due to his work commitments.

8) Should you include your hobbies or interests in a resume?

If the hobbies and interest add value to the resume than include these on the resume. If not leave them out. (Remember to target everything on your resume to the position you are going for)

9) How long does a resume have to be?

Resume writing is not an exact science and there is no exact answer. A standard resume will be between 2-3 pages. This is also dependent on the stage of the career a candidate is currently at. For example a graduate or young professional will typically want to have a 2 page resume. A more senior candidate may need 3-4 pages to include all of their achievements and work history.

10) Do you need to include your whole employment history or should you list only the positions relevant to the role advertised?

This answer is different for every candidate. Obviously a student or graduate will have fewer positions to include than a senior executive and therefore although a certain job may not be relevant to the position which they are applying for it does show the reader that they have work experience. A senior executive can afford to be more targeted and include positions related to the role.

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1.5 Executive Resume Writing (ADDITIONAL SECTION)

The best way to market your career for employment is through your resume. It is your first point of contact and first impression, and in today's society first impressions count! If you want to get noticed and to leave an impact, your executive resume needs to be written perfectly and professionally. In accordance with the human resources experts, there are five basic concepts on how to write the executive resume.

An executive resume must be able to market your skills and highlight your qualifications and experience. As an executive, it is expected that you are able to perform the duties and responsibilities. It is also expected that you have the experience in this type of role, and therefore simply listing your basic duties is not enough to stand out as an executive. The executive resume must focus on the intangible skills that you can bring to the job and it needs to reflect your visions and skills.

Before you sit down to write your resume, imagine that you are the person reading it. So, this implies that you need to put yourself in the shoes of an employer. For every job application, your resume needs to be targeted and directly written towards the job you are applying for. If there is a great emphasis on leadership, then the executive resume needs to highlight leadership examples and areas of your past work history where you displayed leadership, supervision and managerial expertise to lead and guide employers. Using examples and quantifiable numbers will aid your resume.

Rather than a broad statement such as "exceeded sales targets on a monthly basis", turn this statement into an accomplishment statement that uses evidence to back up the statement:



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"Exceeded sales targets by 25% over a 12 month period while working in highly competitive markets, leading to an overall increase in expected revenue by $100,000"

The ten steps in drafting the perfect executive resume:

Step 1: The first step is to read through the job vacancy profile and begin to draft job objectives. Of course, they must be responsive to the position you are applying for

Step 2: Identify what knowledge, skills, and experiences will suit the job position best

Step 3: Create a shortlist of your qualifications and experiences that will reflect your suitability for the position

Step 4: Draw from your past experiences and search for accomplishments that prove you can effectively perform the job responsibilities

Step 5: Elaborate on your brief accomplishments that emphasize your abilities in handling the position you are applying for. It is also very important to emphasize how your work has benefited your previous employers

Step 6: Prepare your work history in chronological order, emphasizing your achievements. Concentrate on areas of how you added value to that positions (increased profit, reduced costs, implemented a new proposal, increased accuracy, project work, employee development, leadership initiatives, awards and recognition)

Step 7: Don't forget to list your educational qualifications, especially those that are relevant to the position. As an executive you have probably completed relevant training courses or leadership workshops that will further aid your resume application

Step 8: Presentation is crucial and the key is consistency!

Step 9: Target your resume with relevant information that will aid you in getting the job. At the executive level, the hiring manager is looking at your overall history – the tangible and intangible elements that make you an executive who can lead the business forward in a positive way. As mentioned previously, employers are looking for more than just work history when making personnel decisions at the executive level

Step 10: Don't forget to use strategic keywords throughout your resume and even include 10-12 keywords to highlight your key skills. Examples of strategic keywords include:

Strategic & Tactical Planning, Relationship Management, Employee Development, New Business Development, Team Building, Training and Mentoring, Client Vendor Relations, Account Retention, Lead Generation, Presentation & Negotiation

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2 Creating the First Impression

2.1 How Important is Your Resume?

When the time comes to looking for a job, your resume is by far the most important link between you and your potential new job. Once you interview and are given the two greatest words of "you're hired," your resume becomes a worthless document. That is, until years later when you decide you want a new challenge, and you reach back into the drawer, dust off the resume and start again.

In a recent college poll, over 90% of college students said they had no idea about how to write a good resume. Even more alarming was that 95% of the students interviewed did not list achievements on their resumes.

In the current economic climate, it is imperative that your resume is not only structured and formatted correctly, but that it is also easy to read and pleasing to the eye. For every single job you apply for, there are potentially 100, 200, and maybe even 300 other people with similar skills who are applying for the very same position. With so many applications it's no wonder that a candidate who has written an incorrect resume is not getting the interview requests.

In my experience, the main reason candidates finds their applications continually rejected has nothing to do with their skills or experience (or even with the lack of skills or experience) – it is because their resumes are just not good enough to get them an interview.

Don't let this happen to you. If writing your resume is stressing you out, think about using a professional resume writer. Many applicants these days use professionals to help them get a leg in front of their competition. Remember – your resume is the most important tool you have to get a job. A professional writer knows how to highlight your strengths and portray this on your resume. In the competitive world we live in, you need to be one step ahead of your competition. A professional writer can help take your resume to the top of the pile.

2.2 What Does Your Professional Resume Say About You?

When you hear the saying "a picture tells a thousand words", this means that a picture can tell a story just as easily as a large amount of text. The same is true about your professional resume. Your resume can tell the reader a lot about the type of person you are and the type of worker you will be.

During one of my earliest roles as a recruiting agent, I was asked to find a shortlist of 5 candidates to fulfill a HR position. The position was an entry level role for a very well-known and respected investment bank and although the client had instructed several requirements that they wanted in the right candidate (e.g. Bachelor Degree), the most important aspect was to find a candidate that would be the "right fit" for this company.

We began our search for the candidate by placing a job advert in one of the online job portals. Within 3 hours we had over 150 resumes sitting in our inbox. By the end of the day we had another 400 (at that stage we decided to take the job advert of the Internet). With our client urgently calling us wanting to know how soon they would receive potential candidates, we had the task of trying to sort through the huge amount of resumes to find the top 5 candidates.

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How to stand out from the competition:

First impressions count! It is estimated that a hiring manager or recruitment agent will spend no more than 15 -30 seconds reading through your CV before either deciding to continue reading or pressing delete. Unfortunately there is not one secret that will guarantee your CV will stand out from the competition, but there are many factors that will get your CV deleted. In my experience the first thing I look for in a CV is professionalism.

Spelling Mistakes and bad grammar:

It is an unforgiveable sin to have any spelling errors on your CV. Spelling mistakes and bad grammar send out a negative signal that that the candidate is careless, does not take pride in his or her work and lacks the professionalism that the client demands. Without even reading through more of the CV I would delete this CV.

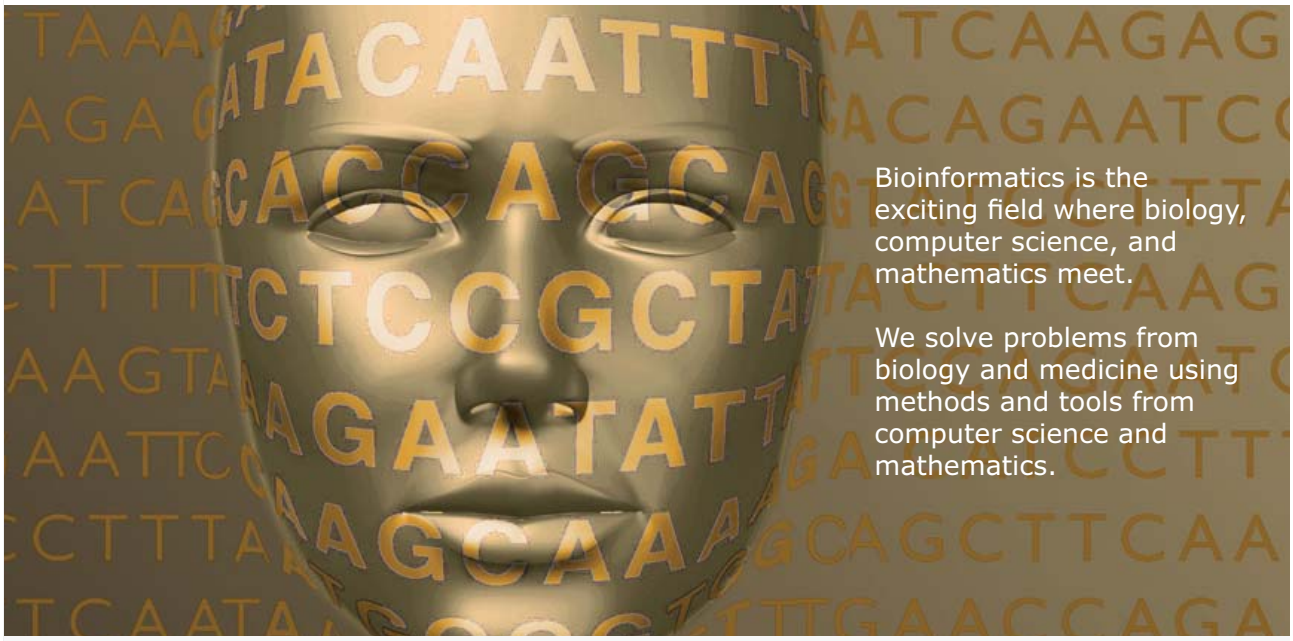
Layout and Presentation:

It is an undisputed fact that if a hiring manager has two CV's sitting on the table; they are instinctively going to be drawn to the CV that is professionally presented and easy to read. No matter what the CV's say, the first impression is already made. If both candidates share similar skills and experiences, just take a guess at which CV the hiring manager is going to choose.

When you sit down to write your CV, remember one thing. Your CV is your representation. This 2-3 page document is all you have to prove to the hiring manager that you are the right person for the job. Present a professional picture and make sure that you stand out above your competition.

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2.3 One Size Does Not Fit Everyone!

Each job seeker can benefit immensely from tips on professional resume writing, even if you elect to use a specialized service to do the job. It still helps to have an idea of what you'd like imprinted on your document.

There are many companies online that can help you compose and print your resume using pre-set templates. Be careful when using a template. Resume formatting, presentation and layout have changed immensely over the years. In this competitive world where a hiring manager may receive upwards of 200-300 resumes for one particular role, it is important that your resume shines above the competition. By using an online template that can easily be found through a Google search, you risk using an existing template that is outdated and will actually be detrimental when applying for new jobs.

Think about it. If you are using a free template that you found online, how good can it actually be? Writing the perfect resume is different for every job seeker and each resume needs to be tailored and specific toward that job seeker.

When it comes to writing the perfect resume, there is no such thing as "one size fits all"

For those who are confident enough to embark on the task of writing their own resumes, the tips below will assist you in composing a quality, professional-looking document that will show employers you mean business, and it will ensure that your application goes to the top of the pile!

The most common form of a resume is a chronological resume. This type of resume should start with your current or most recent employment. Use bullet points to highlight your duties. Personal information is a no-no – skip the birth date, age, weight, height and other irrelevant factors. Include strong key/ action words to enhance your skills, duties and achievements. Some potent words to consider are words like "balanced", "cultivated", "assigned", "edited", and "displayed".

Include an equally powerful, eye-catching qualifications summary at the top of your resume. This should be a brief summary of your goal tailored and customized to the position for which you are applying.

And most importantly - include achievements. The difference between a winning resume and a resume that is going to be deleted is based on including achievements throughout your resume. Providing achievements is the best way to stand out above your competition. You need to prove to the hiring manager through your resume that you are the right person for the job. Mentioning only duties and responsibilities will not make your job application memorable in the eyes of the hiring managers. The only way to prove you're the best candidate is to highlight all the fantastic achievements you have performed throughout your career.

Today's economy may be tough, but if your professional resume is written, formatted and structured correctly and highlights your achievements values you can bring to your next employer, you're well on your way to finding success!

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2.4 Why Job Seekers Require a Professionally Written Resume

In today's society where job hunting has become tougher and tougher and being unemployed is so costly, there are many reasons why job candidates are increasingly turning to resume writing services to give them a greater opportunity to find success. With the growth of the Internet and access to experts in all professions, reaching out for expert assistance is easier than ever before.

Rather than trying to be their own experts, people are now more inclined to reach out to real experts to ensure that the job is done right the first time.

When your hot water tank stops working you call a professional plumber, even though you can probably fix it yourself. You can go online and research how to fix a hot water tank, and you can even pay a few dollars to get a step by step guideline to help fix the tank (I did this and the tank ended up costing twice as much to fix). However, as most people do not have the qualified skills to fix a hot water tank they call in a professional to do the job for them.

The same is true of a professional resume writer. Just like a plumber is trained and qualified to fix your hot water tank, a resume writer has the experience and skills to write a resume that will enhance your job application.

What will a resume writer do for me?

The hardest aspect of resume writing is knowing what actually belongs in the resumes and what type of information will make them stand out. In my past experience as a job recruiter, at least 50% of the candidates for each job shared the same type of education and skills. So the question is – what can a candidate do to highlight their resume? This is what a good resume writer can do. They have the ability to understand what needs to go into the resume and how to best present the information. No matter how good your education, skills or experience, if you are unable to present this information to a hiring manager, you will have very little chance of getting the job.

What is the difference between a good resume and a bad resume?

The difference is HUGE. It is no longer good enough to sit down for 20 minutes, type your name at the top of the resume, write down your work history (including a few bullet points about your duties or responsibilities) and expect to be called for interviews. It just does not work that way anymore. Not only does your resume need to be 100% completely targeted toward the job you are applying for, but it also needs to be written for that particular job market. An accounting resume is different to a mining resume and they both need to be written accordingly. Most importantly, highlighting achievements is the number one rule of resume writing. An average resume will focus too much on the day to day duties and responsibilities. These duties are expected of the job candidate and while they are important (and do need to be in the resume), turning these duties into achievements is how to make your resume stand out. This is what an expert resume writer can do for you!

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3 Does Your Resume Stand Out?

3.1 Are You in the Top 5%?

I recently spoke to the hiring manager of a major accounting firm who told me they can receive in excess of 500 professional resumes for a single job. She told me that reading through every resume is almost impossible, and therefore she makes her decisions within the first 10-15 seconds of opening the resumes. If she didn't screen resumes this way, it would literally take her days upon days to read through every single application.

How to reduce 500 resumes down to the top 20

Presentation is important when it comes to resume writing. When you're reading through 500 resumes you don't want to have to search through resumes with a fine-tooth comb to find certain answers. Weird fonts, pictures and graphics make the resume harder to read and therefore increase the chance of it getting deleted. Bullet points, for example, are far easier to read than long drawn out sentences.

What you need to include on your professional resume:

- Relevant skills
- Employment history
- Industry experience (depending on the job)
- Measurable accomplishments
- Professional presentation and layout



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What not to do!

- Long drawn out sentences for job duties and responsibilities
- Irrelevant information
- Lack of dates (don't make the reader have to guess)
- Lack of professionalism (if the resume looks like it's been written in 10 minutes, it says a lot about the candidate)
- Spelling mistakes

Distinguishing between a resume that was written by a professional resume writer vs. a resume that had been written by the candidate

When you read through enough resumes, it's obvious to pick out the ones that have been written by a professional resume writer. Most of it has to do with the presentation and the format. From a hiring manger's perspective we are only interested in the information contained within the resume. We are only concerned with hiring the right person and with what they can bring to our business.

Final Point

With competition for jobs at a peak and with online job portals in greater demand than ever before, having a professionally written resume can assist in the job seeking process. The resume is one of the most important documents you will ever write as it can potentially change your life. Just remember the golden rule. Your resume is a marketing document and needs to sell your skills. Once you have achieved this you are halfway towards your new job.

3.2 10 Seconds For Your Resume to Shine

One of my favorite books is the "The E Myth Revisited" written by Michael Gerber. In the book Michael speaks about the marketing strategy. He quotes

"In a television commercial, we're told; the sale is made or lost in the first three or four seconds.

In a print ads, tests have shown, 75 percent of the buying decisions are made at the headline alone.

In a sales presentation, data have shown us, the sale is made or lost in the first three minutes"

Same is true for your resume – Reports suggest that a hiring manager will spend no more than 10 seconds reading through your resume before deciding to read on or delete.

Less and less time is being spent reading a person's resume. In today's society, hiring managers are more interested in eliminating candidates before they begin their pursuit of finding the perfect candidate.

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When it comes to writing your resume, remember the golden rule of highlighting your achievements and putting them on the front page. No matter how good your achievements, skills, experience and knowledge if the hiring manager has not found them within 10 seconds than your resume will be deleted – and once it is deleted from the inbox it will never be read again.

Your resume is a marketing document – it's your marketing tool to sell yourself. First impressions count for a lot and if your resume is being deleted than it will be impossible for you to get the job

Do the small things right and your already half way there to your new job.

3.3 Listing Achievements on Your Resume

It's really important to remember that achievements are essential to every single resume.

I've come across so many resumes that include no achievements whatsoever. It's actually very common to see this, so it's important that you include achievements in your resume as they provide a lot of value and depth. Most people forget to include achievements on their resumes because they simply don't know how to communicate them.

The best achievements on a resume are always specific. A lot of people will include "helped to increase sales," for example, on their resume, and this is far from effective. If you did increase sales, tell me a little more about this. What did you do to achieve this? Did you introduce or implement new tactics into the business? Instead of the generic "helped to increase sales," include something like "Increased sales by x% over a 6 month period by introducing new methods of revenue generation." It tells the reader what you did, how you did it, and how successful you were at it.

Be very careful to avoid generic achievements such as "effectively worked in a team environment" or "showed dedication." I can assure you that plenty of other people will also list these achievements on their resumes, so you need to separate yourself from the competition by being one of the few to specify how you actually displayed those achievements.

It's essential to remember that hiring managers do not know you, so you need to be as specific as possible. Listing achievements is a good and effective way to do this, and it will definitely aid you in standing out a bit from your competition.

3.4 Is Your Resume Being Screened?

Believe it or not, but your resume has probably been screened by a hiring manager at some point. One of the most common ways to screen a resume is through an applicant's address. Technically, hiring managers are not supposed to do this, but it happens more often than not.

Why does this happen?

Hiring managers are always looking for the best candidates, of course, but they also want the interview process to be as efficient and easy as possible. They usually prefer candidates who live in nearby areas so they can meet with them in person, as soon as possible, and at no extra cost to the company. Out of state applicants are difficult and expensive. Interview arrangements can take days or weeks, and sometimes the company will have to pay for the applicant's travel arrangements. Let's just say it's not the ideal situation for a hiring manager.

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Hiring managers tend to make assumptions based on where people live and while this is by no means right, it happens all the time. A candidate can be considered to be too much of a hassle to interview if they live far away, or they may be assumed to be unreliable if they don't live close enough. I was once asked to hire sales representatives for a retail shop, and I was told specifically to "only" focus on applicants who lived within a few miles of the store location. The manager was convinced that the reps had to live close to the business because he believed a commute meant they would show up late every day.

If you find that you're not receiving interview requests for positions considered to be "far away," you might want to consider removing your address from your resume. You are not physically mailing in your application, so it is not an essential part to your resume. Removing your address might prevent this initial screening and at least get you to the phone interview where you can then "sell yourself" further.

3.5 Rate My Resume

How good is your current resume?

The first stage you need to go through in order to secure a new job is resume selection. Without a powerful resume that has been properly formatted, presented and written to effectively target your key skills and achievements, your job search may take a lot longer than you first anticipated.

Remember your resume is a marketing document, a compelling reason to interview you.



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Find below 15 resume questions: Let's find out where your resume rates:

- Does your resume flow, enabling a reader to easily understand your career history?
- Have you provided achievements throughout your resume?
- Are your achievements backed up with evidence?
- Have you included your Key Skills?
- Is your resume written in chronological order – complete with dates, job titles, job positions etc?
- Is your resume targeted toward the job you are applying for?
- Is your resume the right length? (Or is it too short or too long?)
- Have you matched your skills and achievements to the job you are applying for?
- Have you used Keywords?
- If a hiring manager was to read your resume would they be inspired to want to interview you?
- Is your resume correctly structured and formatted?
- Is your current resume visually appealing?
- Do you believe that your current resume will stand out from the competition and give you the greatest opportunity of getting the job?
- Does your cover letter introduce and compliment your resume?
- If you apply for an online job that typically can attract between 100-300 applications, will your resume be in the top 10%?

Give yourself a point for every time you answered "yes". Did you receive a score above 12?

A score of 12 or above will put your resume in the top 20%, and gives you a good chance of finding employment. But don't forget that typically your resume needs to be better than just the top 20% - it needs to be in the top 10%

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4 Resume Tips

(The Student and Graduate Corner)

4.1 Writing a Resume With No Content to Include

Writing your first resume can be very daunting, especially if you have little to no work experience to speak of. This is a common problem for students, and a lot of them go about addressing this problem the wrong way – they either apply for jobs that do not require a resume, or they turn in a resume with little to no content.

DO NOT LEAVE YOUR RESUME BLANK!!!

Every person, including you, has skills and knowledge that you can show off, even if you have never worked a day in your life. The challenge is for you to discover and transcribe these skills and knowledge into words. Students, for example, can look to relevant courses and educational achievements – what skills did you pick up from some of your classes? Did you strengthen your written communication skills, for example? Did you increase your knowledge of marketing principles and practices?

Students can also write about relevant courses in the same way they would write about a past job. They can provide a brief description of the course, for example, along with "key roles" undertaken and "achievements" that resulted because of their work.

I would highly advise catering each resume toward the job you are applying for. Take a look at the job description – does it list qualifications or skills that they are looking for in a candidate? Try to include these somewhere in your resume.

Most job seekers are qualified for the positions they apply for, whether they have years of professional experience or not – the challenge is to figure out where you've picked up these skills and to transfer that knowledge onto paper.

4.2 Ways to Boost Your Resume While You're Still in College

The job market is tough out there, especially for graduates who are competing against thousands of others for the same jobs. The way you construct your resume and cover letter will definitely give you a leg up on the competition, but there are also other ways to improve the content that you include on your resume.

One problem that graduates are typically faced with is the fact that they have little to no work experience. Employers obviously understand this, so they won't hold this against you, but they also understand that opportunities to gain real-world experiences are available to students all the time. The students who take advantage of these opportunities are usually the ones who will stand out to hiring managers.

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Students have access to a variety of resources. They can apply for a number of internships or volunteer positions, most of which are unpaid, and these types of positions are usually easy to find within your school. Internships are designed to not interfere with your school work; they typically occupy only a few hours a week and they do not impact your ability to study or complete your course work. While working for free may not be at the top of your list, you need to realize that it will give you an advantage over your competition and it's in your best interest to jump at the opportunity.

Just think about it from a hiring manager's point of view. He or she is deciding between 2 candidates for a position. Both received excellent marks in school and both have beautifully written resumes and cover letters. One, however, used one of his summers to intern for 12 weeks. Looking at these applications strictly from a qualifications point of view, which one do you think has a slight edge over the other?

Sure there are tons of factors that can influence one candidate's qualifications over another, but your best chance is to always stay ahead of the competition. Experience is never frowned upon.

4.3 Education Vs. Work Experience on a Resume: What Comes First?

A lot of people find themselves in a dilemma when it comes to formatting the content on their resumes. Is it better to list your education first or your professional experience? Like most answers, the answer to this question depends entirely on you.

Trust and responsibility

NNE and Pharmaplan have joined forces to create NNE Pharmaplan, the world's leading engineering and consultancy company focused entirely on the pharma and biotech industries.

Inés Aréizaga Esteva (Spain), 25 years old
Education: Chemical Engineer

– You have to be proactive and open-minded as a newcomer and make it clear to your colleagues what you are able to cope. The pharmaceutical field is new to me. But busy as they are, most of my colleagues find the time to teach me, and they also trust me. Even though it was a bit hard at first, I can feel over time that I am beginning to be taken seriously and that my contribution is appreciated.



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People who list education first on their resumes typically have little to no work experience or are recent graduates, and this is usually the proper way to formulate your resume. Education will never hurt you on a resume, so if you're applying for a job and have little to no work experience, it's probably best that you include your education first. You can further boost your resume by including any educational awards you've received and you can also list courses you've completed that are relevant to the job you're applying for.

On the flip side, if your work experience far outweighs your education, it's probably best to include this first, but it's entirely up to you to decide. It's important to keep the job you're applying for in mind when deciding how to construct your resume. Are you applying for a position as a marketing director, for example, and you have 15 years of experience in a similar position? If so, this should be one of the first things a hiring manager sees on your resume.

The most important thing to remember, however, is that both education and professional experience are equally valuable in their own right. If you're concerned about which to list first on your resume, you can include both of them in your objective statement to make sure that they are both noticed straight away.

4.4 Top 100 Most Powerful Resume Words

In today's society your resume is the most important document you have to get yourself an interview. Including power resume words will increase your chance of getting hired by 80%! When a hiring manager is seeing the same old resume time and time again which includes the cliché words and phrases such as "highly dedicated individual" or "great team player" you are guaranteeing yourself that your resume will be deleted.

Poorly chosen words and clichéd phrases can destroy the interest of the reader. Power words when chosen correctly can have the opposite effect of motivating and inspiring the reader

Power Resume Words will make help you stand out from your competition and increase your chances of getting hired!

Top 100 Power Resume Words!

Advanced, Assigned, Assessed, Absorbed, Accelerated, Attained, Attracted, Announced, Appraised, Budgeted, Bolstered, Balanced, Boosted, Bargained, Benefited, Beneficial, comply, Critiqued, Closed, Collaborated, Designed, Delegated, Demonstrated, Developed, Detected, Efficient, Enhanced, Excelled, Exceeded, Enriched, Fulfilled, Financed, Forecasted, Formulated, Generated, Guided, Granted, Helped, Hosted, Implemented, Investigated, Increased, Initiated, Influenced, Integrated, Innovated, Instituted, Justified, Listed, Logged, Maintained, Mentored Measured, Multiplied, Negotiated, Observed, Operated Obtained, Promoted, Presented Programmed Provided Projected, Qualified, Quantified, Quoted, Recommended, refine, revamp, reacted, Retained, Recovered, Reinstated, Rejected, Sustained, Skilled, Saved, Scheduled, Supported, Secured, Simplified, Screened, Segmented, Streamlined, Strengthened, Triumphed, Troubleshot, Taught, Tutored, Translated, Trained, Uncovered, United, Unified, Updated, Upgraded, Validated, Viewed, Worldwide, Witnessed

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4.5 Including Key Achievements

If I had a dollar for every resume I saw that did not include "key achievements", I would be a very wealthy resume writer!

Failing to include key achievements throughout your resume is a recipe for disaster and will cause your resume to be put straight in the deleted folder and never to be seen again.

The job market is competitive, and if you're going to prove to the hiring manager that you are the best candidate for a job, you need to show off every key achievement and skill that will stand you out against all the other job candidates. Remember the golden rule of resume writing – your resume is a marketing document and, as such, needs to market all the great things that you can bring to a potential job. Providing achievements that are backed up with quantitative evidence will guarantee that you will stand out from the other job seekers.

The best written resumes adequately sell the person's achievements, skills and personality. Do this correctly and I guarantee that you will find success.

What Types of Achievements should you include in your resume?

Employers want to know the value you are going to add to the business and therefore want to see examples of your past behaviors to indicate your future behaviors.

Types of achievements to include are:

- Ways you saved the company money
- Examples of how you reduced costs
- Examples of new ideas or implementations that resulted in positive outcomes
- Special awards or recognitions you received (e.g. voted #1 salesperson for two consecutive years)
- Training, hiring, mentoring, leading, managing staff
- Resolution of problems or issues that led to a positive outcome
- Training courses, seminars, workshops that you successfully completed

2 key Tricks and Tips to turn your resume into a selling tool

Use strategic keywords throughout your resume to catch the reader's eye. Strategic keywords will ensure that your resume will be picked up by employers using software programs that help eliminate candidate resumes

Go through the job requirements to find out exactly what the employer is looking for in the right candidate and incorporate these directly into your resume. For example, if the job is looking for someone with leadership skills, make sure you provide examples about the leadership you performed either in your past jobs or through community involvement or extra-curricular activities

Including responsibilities and duties in your resume are important because it shows the reader what you actually do on a day to day basis. However, in order to take your resume to the next level and stand out against the competition (and get the highest possible salary!), you need to focus on value added achievements.

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4.6 Listing Hobbies

I frequently come across resumes that include a section for "hobbies and interests" or something similar. Many people think it's necessary to include something like this, however I can assure you that it's probably best to avoid doing so. There is a limited amount of space for content on your resume and just a small amount of time for the reader to look over your information. That being said, you should use it strictly to highlight your professional qualifications and achievements, not your personal hobbies and interests.

Hiring managers are looking to see how you can specifically help them and their companies, not whether you enjoy skiing or bike riding. This sort of information is often times seen as "fluff" – in other words, irrelevant information that is used solely to take up space on a resume to make it seem longer. If you're concerned about your resume looking too short, there are lots of ways to increase the content without having to lists your hobbies and interests. Think about substituting them for something more work-related, like a section for your professional qualifications or computer-related skills. Or maybe try adding some achievements onto your professional experience section.

While I feel I make a strong point against listing these on your resume, people are always going to be adamant about using them. So, if you absolutely must include your hobbies and interests, try to at least make them pertain to the job you are applying for. Do any of your hobbies involve using your leadership skills, for example? Do they show a pattern of long-term commitment? The most important thing to remember is to keep the content on your resume professionally relevant.



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4.7 More Numbers Less Words

Are you sick of not landing job interviews? Are you applying for jobs you feel you are more than qualified for, but not having any success? More than likely, the problem has more to do with the way your resume is written than not having the right skill sets for the job.

Resume writing is an art form and in order to be successful your resume needs to pass 4 major rules:

Skills and qualifications are highlighted in order to make your resume instantly stand out. Reports suggest that once a hiring manager or recruiter opens your resume you have between 10-20 seconds to make an impact. No impact, no interview, no job!

Strategic keywords to highlight your achievements and pass online screening software tools that are used to reduce the amount of candidate resumes that a business may receive for a certain role.

Formatted, structured and presented specifically to target your experience and industry

Presented in a professional manner using the correct font, bullet points, headings, length and most importantly error free!

How can I make my resume stand out from the crowd?

Using numbers and quantitative evidence to highlight your achievements is key to standing out from the competition and presenting value added evidence about the type of behaviour a hiring manager can expect from you. If your position involves business development, for example, rather than including a generic description such as "Excellent communicator and relationship manager", you can spice up this sentence and turn it into an "Accomplishment Statement" that will aid your resume in being noticed. (Don't forget to use strategic keywords!)

Example 1: Successful business development and account management helped to exceed annual sales target of $X by 15% for the full financial year.

Example 2: Managed a team of 6 Sales Representatives in conducting product launches to increase new product penetration into the market leading to an overall increase of $5 million over a 12 month period

Example 3: Part of the Project Management Team involved in the rollout of a 200 networks leading to a 10% increase in revenue and a further 20% in cost savings.

Proof and Evidence

Using numbers and evidence to back up your statements will aid your resume application and make your resume shine against other candidates. In the current economy where jobs are tough to get, you need to prove to the hiring manager that you are the best candidate for the job and the best way to do this is to use numbers to back up your achievement statements.

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5 Resume Mistakes

5.1 Don't Trivialize Your Past Experiences

After writing numerous resumes for students and recent graduates, I found that the vast majority of them tend to omit part-time or temporary jobs from their resumes. A lot of students have experience working in either the retail or hospitality sector, and because these jobs are not "real jobs" or full-time positions, a lot of students do not feel the need to include them. "Why would I write that I worked there on my resume?" a student recently asked me, referring to a retail store.

The answer is – a lot of part-time and temporary jobs that students tend to hold actually provide valuable skills and experience that employers are looking for on resumes. Employers are aware that you probably have little to no work experience, so any experience is usually viewed as a positive.

The important thing is to demonstrate this in an effective way on your resume. Don't just write "folded clothes" or "processed transactions" when referring to a retail position. Instead, include that you built and maintained relationships with customers or that you regularly met or exceeded your sales targets. There are tons of other skills you could have acquired, but it all depends on the way you present yourself. Sell yourself and make your position stand out amongst similar positions from other candidates.

Just remember – don't trivialize your work experience. There are skills to be learned from every job, and it's important to show on your resume that you've acquired skills that are relevant to jobs you're applying for, especially when you have little to no work experience.

5.2 Instant Resume Killers

Want to cause a recruiter to toss your resume instantly? When an employer is faced with several – possibly hundreds – of applications, he or she will try to narrow this list down quickly. Making one of the following mistakes can get your resume tossed in just a matter of seconds.

No cover letter attached

This is not a good start to any job application. Failing to include a cover letter instantly means that you have failed to put in that extra 10 minutes of effort, and this is never a good thing. A lot of recruiters delete their first round of applicants simply because they have not included a cover letter.

Applying for the wrong job

It happens all the time – candidates get so caught up in applying to as many jobs as possible that they accidentally send their resume sand cover letters to the wrong people. When a recruiter sees that a cover letter has been accidentally addressed to the wrong company, it will get tossed immediately.

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A bad picture on a resume (especially an inappropriate one)

It's true that different resume standards apply to different countries. That being said, some countries are more accepting (and encouraging) of pictures on resumes than others, however please stick to professional-looking photos only – you are applying for a job after all. There is no need to include a picture of yourself posing in a tank top or drinking with friends. Better to stick to no picture at all.

Providing little to no details about your work experience

Employers want you to be as specific as possible with regards to your qualifications, and therefore you should provide an adequate amount of information. I can't tell you how many times I've seen people list their job titles ONLY under "work experience", and that will just not cut it. Once an employer sees that you've provided little to no detail on your experience, they will immediately delete your resume.

5.3 Is Your Resume Too Long?

One of my friends recently posted an available position within her company on a major job search website, and she instantly received tens of applications in her inbox. She works for a small business – she is not exclusively a hiring manager – so filling this vacancy was just an added responsibility on top of everything she had to do already. In other words, she had very little time to waste.



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Her decision to read or discard a resume was made within seconds- and based simply on the length of the resume. "I simply don't have enough time to read each person's resume all the way through," she says. "In order to give everyone a chance, I need to skim, and I need to skim through only the important information – I don't have time to look for it. One resume I came across was 9 pages long, another was 7. One resume listed a retail position in 1976 as the top position under 'work experience' and another opened with a page-long biography. Who has time to read that?"

The answer is probably no one. You need to be mindful about the length of your resume – a reader can discard your resume without even looking at your name the second he or she sees that it is too long. Make it easy for them – they don't want to hunt for the most relevant facts.

So how do you cut down the length? Keep some of the following in mind:

Objective statement:

Some people tend to get a little carried away here and it adds to the length of their resume. This is not supposed to be a paragraph or, even worse, a page. A sentence or two is plenty.

Professional experience:

This tends to be a problem for people with a lot of work experience. Make sure you provide the most information on the positions relevant to the job you are applying for. Keep dates in mind as well – unless absolutely necessary, you do not need to list positions you held 15 years ago.

References:

Do not provide these unless asked. Sometimes this can take up a lot of resume space.

While the ideal length of a resume is entirely debatable, you generally do not want to exceed 2 pages. Stick to the most important facts and try to incorporate some of my tips into cutting down the length – it will increase your chances of getting read!

5.4 Spelling and Grammar Mistakes

You've probably been told over and over that the use of proper spelling and grammar are extremely important on your resume and that one little mistake can ruin your chances at obtaining a particular job. It seems to me that these warnings are given out all the time. When I ask people to tell me the number one mistake on a resume, they almost always say that it's bad spelling and/or grammar. This really makes me wonder because it's pretty rare that I come across an error-free resume. There always seems to be something, whether it's a misspelled word or a missing comma. The best explanation I can come up with is that people today seem to rely a little too much on spell and grammar check programs.

Spelling and grammar check programs are great in many ways, and they seem to pick up a lot of common mistakes. For example, they automatically add apostrophes to words like "can't" when you forget to put one in there. Or they might automatically capitalize the word "I." They also do a good job at highlighting some clearly misspelled words. Despite all of these benefits, however, programs like these should not be seen as flawless. There are tons of things they can miss, and below are a few examples:

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Same word, different spelling:

Some words sound exactly alike, but have different spellings with entirely different meanings. Spell check will not pick up when these words are used improperly. These words could include: then, than, your, you're, too, to, two, their, there, are, our… and this is only naming a few.

Word choice:

Did you know, for example, that the words "which" and "that" can not exactly be used interchangeably?

Punctuation:

Comma omissions and unnecessary commas are usually not picked up.

Overall structure of your resume:

Is your resume written in past or present tense? Or are the tenses all over the place? Consistency is something these programs won't notice.

I'm not saying that you shouldn't use these programs – they are useful in many situations. I'm saying that you shouldn't rely solely on them to check over your resume because they aren't foolproof. It's important to check and re-check it yourself and to then also show it to a couple of friends and see what they can find. We sometimes rely on computers to do too much for us, and we forget that they aren't even close to flawless. Don't underestimate the capabilities of the human eye.

5.5 Top 10 Resume Mistakes

My philosophy is simple: Stick to the facts. If in doubt, leave it out!

 # Abbreviations

Avoid abbreviations! They are unprofessional and not universally accepted. Trust me; nothing looks worse on a resume than seeing sentences resembling the following: "duties included answering the fone and going 2 c clients." This is a resume, not a text message. Make sure you use correct words and proper sentences.

 # Personal Information

Leave off anything related to hobbies or personal interests. If it doesn't relate to employment it doesn't belong on a resume. Information such as weight and height is irrelevant (unless of course you're trying out for basketball team). I have seen resumes where people include their eye color and comments about their skin ("glowing skin"). Do not give the reader a reason to eliminate you because of your personal characteristics. Again, stick to the formula – if it does not relate to the job it doesn't belong on the resume.

 # Graphics / Artwork

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People feel that in order to be noticed they need their resume to look like a piece of artwork. This perception is wrong and has the opposite effect of appearing unprofessional and amateur. At the end of the day, the employer only wants to see skills, duties, and achievements. He or she is not interested because your resume is shaded yellow with a butterfly in the top right-hand corner.

 # Negativity

Never, never, never be negative on your resume or cover letter (and most importantly, in your interview). If you left your previous job because you hated your boss, keep it to yourself. Do not try to explain this on your resume because you cannot explain those reasons in writing. Remember, a resume's job is to promote and sell. Do not get eliminated immediately for being negative.

 # No Dates

DO NOT MAKE THE READER HAVE TO GUESS! This is such a killer on any resume. INCLUDE DATES. What years did you go to high school? How long did you go to university? When did you graduate? How long did you work at your current job?

Do not make the person reading your resume have to ask these questions. The minute this happens, your resume is going to one place—the trash bin! Make sure your resume flows and you have no gaps in your dates. If you took a year off to go travelling, include this. When you include dates DO NOT just include years. For example, "I worked at McDonalds from 2006-2008"– what does this mean? Did you work for 3 from January 2006 to December 2008, or for a little over 1 year from December 2006 to January 2008?



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 # Long-winded

Long long long long long resumes are boring!!!! If an employer sees an extremely long resume, they will immediately develop a negative frame of mind. Remember, resume readers tend to have little patience, especially when they need to read 100 resumes. You do not gain extra brownie points for writing the longest resume—enough said!

 # Lack of achievements / highlights

I never understand how people get this wrong, but so many times people fill up their resumes with irrelevant information, and they leave off the most vital part of a resume—showing off your highlights and achievements. Think about it—most people who apply for the same job can all do the standard day to day duties. So what separates the good resume from the bad resume? It's the one that includes achievements and highlights. It includes how they were an asset at their previous job. Employers want to see not that you just worked and did a good job, but that you added value to the company. Leaving off your achievements is the best way to get your resume tossed in the bin. Alternatively, including value-added achievements is the best way to get your resume put on the top of the list.

 # Irrelevant information

Everyone is proud of achievements they have accomplished throughout their life. Finishing second place in the 100 metre sprint final in my first year of high school was a great thrill, but is it relevant on my resume? Does it add value to it? Use common sense when including "extra information." Receiving your CPR certificate is relevant when you're applying for a job that requires this, such as a lifesaver or swimming instructor. It isn't so relevant if you received your CPR certificate 10 years ago, and now you're going for a job as a CEO.

 # Grammar mistakes and typos

People read this point and think, "Obviously my resume isn't going to have spelling mistakes and typos." I can tell you from experience that 1 in 5 resumes will make this vital mistake. When an employer has 100 resumes, the first 20 are eliminated because of grammar mistakes or typos. These mistakes are glaringly obvious on a resume. Make sure you use spell-check, but more importantly, re-read your resume. Even give it to someone else to read over.

 # Trying to sound "Too Clever"

You may think that using words such as "meticulous," "scrupulous" or "industrious" to describe yourself may make you sound smart, unfortunately they can have the opposite effect. Your resume is a representation of you. Don't forget this!

5.6 Too Much Make Up

As a job candidate there are many variables that are beyond your control when applying for a job. Employer perceptions, personal preferences and competition are just a few.

Resume writing is an art form. There is no foolproof advice that will guarantee your resume to land an interview, however there are many different aspects that make up a great resume and in order to succeed you need to make sure your professional resume ticks all the right boxes.

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There are millions of tips on how to write the best resume but the number rule of professional resume writing is as follows:

If your resume is difficult to read, fewer people will read it.

A well designed resume should aim to allow any person to pick up your resume up and read it. Your resume needs to allow 100% of people who wish to read your resume the ability to do so. I'm not saying everyone will understand what you do on a day to day basis, but they must be able to read through the resume and clearly be able to identify your work history, dates, skills, achievements etc.

So where do job seekers go wrong when preparing their resume writing?

Too much "make-up"

A resume is a marketing document and as such needs to be written in a professional way. Think about all the important documents you have received. The document is professionally laid out, spelling and grammar is correct, and the document is formatted and presented professionally. Your resume has one single purpose and that is to get you a job. It is not a work of art that is going to be hung up in the living room or framed in the study.

Trying to "Deceive the Reader"

The reader of the resume is only interested in the facts! Hiring managers and recruiters read hundreds of resumes on a daily basis and can easily pick up a resume that is exaggerated or sounds "too good to be true".

Wasting Time and Space

A good resume will attract the reader's attention within the first 10-15 seconds. Alternatively, a bad resume will be deleted within 10-15 seconds. Do not waste the limited time and space you have on your resume to impress the reader. Focus on your achievements and the value-added skills you can offer your next employer. Use selected keywords to highlight your skills and promote yourself. Your resume is your selling tool and therefore needs to be able to sell all the key areas that will make you the perfect candidate for the job. Unfortunately once your resume has been deleted it will never be able to be viewed again. You have one chance to impress!

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6 Cover Letters

6.1 What is the Cover Letter?

Most people hate writing a cover letter even more than they hate preparing a resume! I recently worked with a job seeker who said that he refused to apply for any graduate roles that required a cover letter to accompany the application. This is was what I liked to call a "resume bomber" – someone whose aim is to apply to as many jobs as possible and just "hope for the best". Unfortunately, he quickly realized that most companies not only require a cover letter, but demand a cover letter. If a hiring manager sees that a cover letter is missing from the job application, it is more than likely that the resume will be deleted immediately.

From the viewpoint of a hiring manager – if the candidate cannot follow basic instructions in applying for a job, how can they be trusted to perform the job?

Before we begin to go through the importance of the cover letter, it is important to define exactly what the cover letter is and what purpose it serves.

The cover letter is an introductory letter to accompany the resume or curriculum vitae. The cover letter is not a job application, nor should it be a part of the resume or follow the conclusion of the resume.

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In the competitive job environment where first impressions count and the time we have to impress the potential reader is becoming shorter and shorter, the most effective way to ensure that your application stands out from the competition is through a professionally written cover letter. There is, however, a fine line between a cover letter that enhances your application and a cover letter that can actually do you a disservice.

Top 3 Tips to Cover Letter Writing:

First impressions:

You may have the greatest personality and the exact skills required for a particular job, but without a compelling cover letter that attracts the reader's attention immediately you will never get the opportunity to prove that you are the perfect candidate. Establish your reason for applying to the role within the first couple of sentences. As a graduate you need to establish your "brand" and make it clear to the reader that you have unique attributes that make you the perfect person for the job.

Target your cover letter:

A "one size fits all" approach to job seeking does not work. There is no quick fix to getting a new job and a generic cover letter will be spotted from a mile away! The key to cover letter writing is to individualize the cover letter to the reader and make sure that they know that your letter has been written for their specific job. A targeted cover letter can help open doors and portray that professional image.

Forget the Clichés!

I can't stand clichés! It's my number one pet hate. When I read through a cover letter, I want the person's personality to shine. The last thing I want to read is a cliché. As the hiring manager, I want to feel that what I am reading is a truthful assessment as opposed to statements that do not add any value to the person's application.

The final point to remember...

If you are serious about your job search, you need to get serious about preparing a targeted cover letter to compliment your resume. As mentioned above, first impressions rule and to ensure that your resume is given a chance, you need your cover letter to shine. In the ultra-competitive job environment, hiring managers are looking for any excuse to delete a candidate's application. Do not let yourself down by failing at the very first step.

6.2 Advantages to Preparing a Targeted Cover Letter

Preparing a highly targeted and personalized cover letter and you are already on your way to a brand new job. Obviously, you will need a professionally written resume also! By impressing the reader (hiring professional) and they will enthusiastically move onto your resume. Disappoint the reader and your resume will be deleted.

Will a perfectly written cover letter ensure that you get the job? Of course not. However, a poorly written cover letter will guarantee that your application will not get the attention that is needed to be one of the top candidates. In the current job market there are three areas of your cover letter that you need to pay special attention to:

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Target the employer's needs:

Too many times, we write our cover letter and resume from our point of view. From the perspective of the hiring manager they want to know that you have the skills to do the job you are applying for. If the employer is looking for a candidate who is going to need to travel and spend time outside of the office then you need to emphasize that travelling is something you are willing to do (and enjoy). If you do not feel that the job is right for you, then the easy solution is not to apply for the job. However, if you do decide to apply for a certain role then target the needs of the employer and the skills that they require from the perfect candidate.

Don't be afraid to emphasize your previous achievements:

When applying for a job you need to prove that you are the best candidate. The only way to do this is by highlighting your achievements and all those skills that make you both unique and special. Try to establish yourself as an expert. Remember that in order to stand out, you need to be in the top 5-10% of all the candidates applying for the role. While no one likes arrogance, employers DO want to see examples of your achievements that would make you the right person for the job.

Provide examples how you will add value to the organization:

If you don't believe that you have the skills to add value to the particular organization then why is the hiring manager going to hire you? It is not enough anymore just to present your skills and achievements but you need to prove to the reader that you are capable of adding value to the role and to the whole organization. Providing examples of the added value expertise that you can offer should be highlighted in your cover letter to help differentiate your application as compared to others.

6.3 Your Cover Letter is Just as Important as Your Resume!

Unless you are being recruited by a family member, friend, or close acquaintance, every single hiring manager will want to look at your resume before they call you in for an interview.

I cannot stress enough how important it is to have a cover letter accompany your resume EVERY SINGLE TIME you send it in and to make sure that it's tailored specifically to the job you're applying for.

Think about it from a hiring manager's point of view. They can receive hundreds of applications for a single job position that they need to fill in just a short amount of time. On top of their regular job duties, they need to sift through all of the applications and find the top 5% to call in for an interview. It's just not possible for them to look at every single person's application. So what do they do? They narrow down the field by using the easiest and fastest tool they have – first impressions.

Let's relate this to a different topic – sports. You're a coach and need to "recruit" the best players possible for your team…

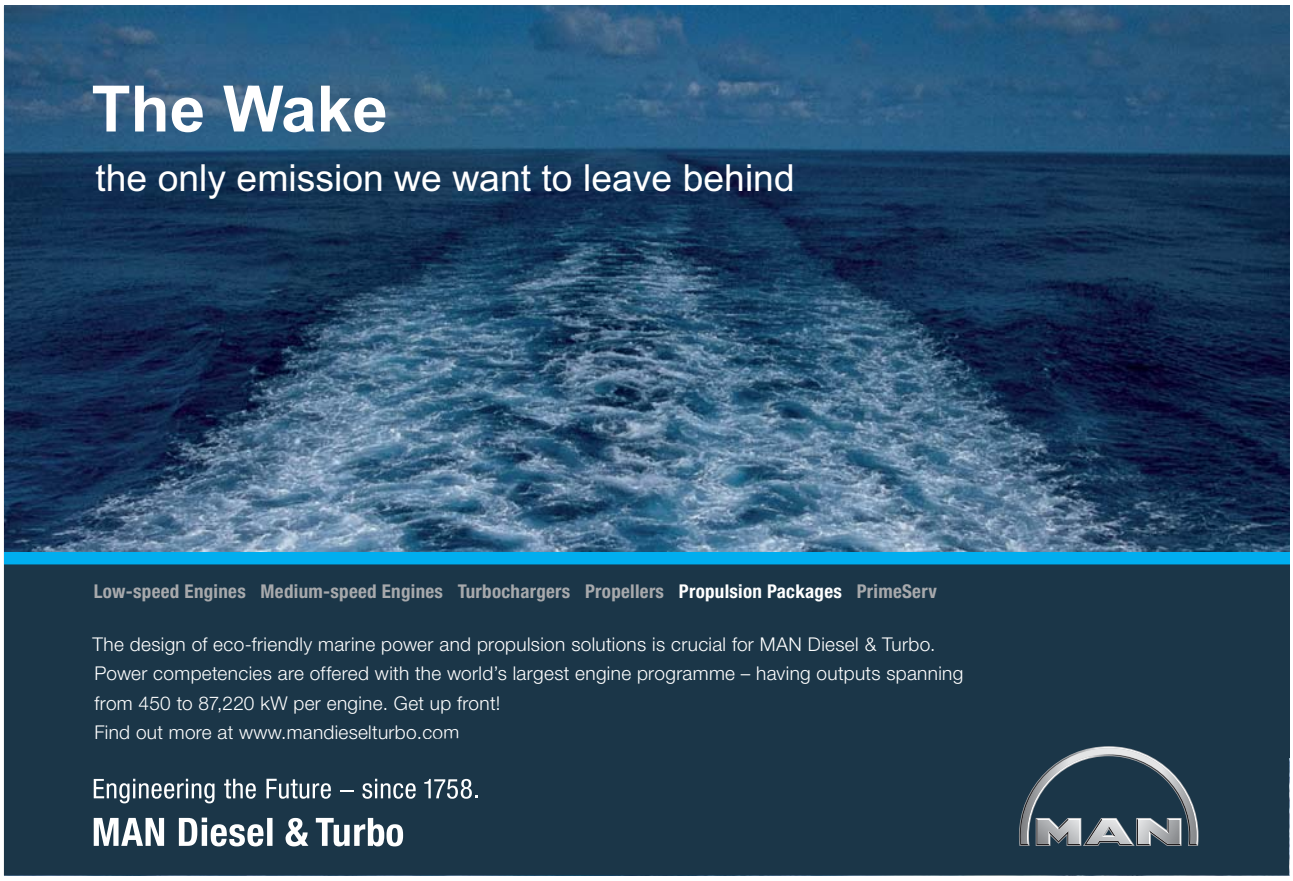
You're coaching a soccer team and need to pick 15 members for your squad out of a potential 100 and you only have 2 hours to do so. It's impossible to take a good look at every single player's skills in only 2 hours, so you need to quickly narrow your search before you can study the players further. In order to do so, and without knowing anything about the players, you're going to rely on your first impressions to make the first cut.

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Take a look at the players standing before you – are they all wearing proper soccer attire and equipment? Do they look excited and enthusiastic about being here? Think about it – if there's someone dressed in a soccer uniform and cleats and another one wearing jeans, a t-shirt, and sandals, one of them definitely appears to be more interested in joining your team than the other. Building on that, and only considering first impressions, one looks a lot more capable than the other. While there may be a hundred explanations for this difference, it really doesn't matter when you have a limited amount of time – the ones who don't look interested are not going to make the first cut.

Consider the above situation and think about it from a hiring manager's point of view. You have 50 applications before you and you need to call 5 people in for an interview. You have a limited amount of time to decide, so you need to eliminate some applications quickly. What can we see without even reading the details of each application? Some have cover letters along with the resume and some do not. The applications without cover letters are a little bit like the people showing up to soccer tryouts with jeans and no equipment. They make a terrible first impression – they don't appear as interested as the other ones, so why should anyone bother with them?

Applications without cover letters are always the first ones discarded. The presence of a cover letter shows a genuine interest in a job position because you actually took the time to write it. The current economic climate is not exactly one that is overflowing with jobs; it's not like companies are hiring for the sake of it. Make sure you show a hiring manager that you have taken the time to merely write a letter to show your interest in their job position. If you don't bother showing an interest in them, the hiring manager will have no interest in you.



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6.4 Secret Cover Letter Tips

It's no secret that the job application process has changed significantly in the past 10 years. Applicants used to send hard copies of their resumes and cover letters to hiring managers via email or fax, but most jobs today are posted online and applications are sent to hiring managers via email.

Applications still consist of cover letters, but the format of cover letters has changed a little bit in the online revolution. Cover letters used to be written in a standard letter format, and while this standard format is still widely accepted today and is by no means wrong, a lot of people are adapting their cover letters to complement the use of email in the application process.

One thing I always encourage people to do is to place their cover letter in the body of their email in addition to attaching a copy. I suggest this for 2 reasons. One, it speeds up the process for the recruiter (as they will only have to open up one attachment instead of two) and two, it helps eliminate the possibility (in the recruiter's mind) that your email could be spam. Think about it – if you received an email with attachments, you would be more likely to open the attachments if there were some personalized text in the body. There will also be times where the recipient is unable to open your resume attachment, and they are much more likely to respond and request another copy if there is some text in the body of your email.

I do also suggest that you ALSO include a copy of your cover letter as an attachment just in case the recruiter would like to print it and show it to people.

In the grand scheme of things, these suggestions seem pretty minute, but with the competition as high as it is right now, why not pull out all the stops?

6.5 Three Words That Will Kill Your Cover Letter

It's pretty easy to recognize a terrible cover letter within the first 2 seconds of reading one. People tend to forget that this document is a sales tool – you use it to sell yourself to a prospective employer. That being said, it's very easy to ruin your potential sale with just a few simple words.

The most important thing you need to do when writing your cover letter is remember that the person reading it cares about what you have to offer them, not about who you are in general. When you start off with "My name is…" a hiring manager is immediately going to think that he or she is about to read a life story, and they won't be particularly interested. While it may be anything but a mini-autobiography, it doesn't matter when you've already turned off the reader with those 3 words.

Starting off with "My name is…" is pretty irrelevant when you think about it. Your name is already at the top of the page, or it's listed as the return name in your email message; you don't need to remind them a third time. Instead, you need to focus on why you are writing this letter, and stick to just that.

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It's important to keep cover letters short and very straight-forward. Hiring managers are very busy and they don't have time to read more than a few short paragraphs. Your writing needs to be engaging and interesting; you want the reader to feel compelled to read the entire thing – you don't want them to get turned off immediately. Hiring managers tend to skim through cover letters quickly, so it's important to highlight the most important details: why you are contacting them and why you are qualified. They aren't interested in much more, so make sure you keep it simple.

Your goals (in addition to eventually getting hired) are to have your resume read and to be called in for an interview, so try to use all the tools you can to make that possible. Remember these tips when writing your cover letter, and I guarantee you'll find more success in getting called for an interview.

6.6 Top 5 Cover Letter Mistakes

If you're going to take the extra time to write a cover letter that you include along with your resume, you might as well write it properly! We talked to a few recruiters and found out that they frequently find mistakes so annoying that cause them to immediately discard some applications all together. Here's a sample of some of the mistakes they mentioned:

Letter addressed to the wrong person or company: It doesn't annoy hiring managers that you're probably applying for other jobs, but it does annoy them when you don't take the time to check that your cover letter is addressed properly. Sending it to the wrong person or company will get your application deleted immediately.

Spelling and/or grammar mistakes: You're probably tired of being told to check and re-check your work, but it is extremely important! When spelling or grammar errors show up on your cover letter, the person reading it is going to think that you either don't know how to write properly or that you didn't bother to check it over. Either way, it's bad news for you.

It's too long: Cover letters should be short and to the point. They should provide some basic information about how you are specifically qualified for the job in question. That's pretty much it. Anything longer than a few paragraphs starts to look more like an essay, and it's an immediate turn-off.

No contact details: It happens quite frequently – people forget to include their name, let alone a way to contact them. While your details may be on your resume, no one wants to take extra time to fish for information that should have been provided for them right away.

No cover letter: This is the worst mistake of all. You're competing against dozens of other applicants who have instantly shown that they took more time to apply than you.

At the end of the day, you just want to give yourself the best chance possible to be called for an interview. Think about what a potential employer wants to know most about you, and try to convert this into a cover letter.

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