

Market Yourself with a Resume that Gets Results

Contributed by Michael Fleischer
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Your resume should be like any good marketing plan — designed to sell! It needs to hook potential employers as soon as they see it, so they bypass the discard pile and take a second look. Creating a resume that accomplishes that can't be done in just a few minutes because there's much more to it than listing your work history and year of graduation. Try thinking of it as an art form, because it is. Great resumes get a second look and an interview, but bad ones don't get a second thought.

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If you're serious about scoring as many interviews as you can and for the jobs you really want, then learning how to market yourself with a resume that grabs attention should be one of your top priorities.

Know the Market

Advertising companies do market research before they put together an ad campaign. Why? Because they need to know who they're selling to and what those people want. The same strategy should apply to your job search. You have to know what jobs are available to know how to market yourself to them. Scour the job boards and classifieds to see what's out there, and know what kind of job you're looking for — finding a job can be pretty tough if you have no goals or ideas about what you want to do.

Target Your Resume

Determine which jobs you're interested in and target your resume to each one. Don't submit the same version of it for every job you apply for — change words and move things around so your resume uses some of the same lingo as the job descriptions. Use keywords to highlight your experience and accomplishments that best match those sought for each job. Your goal should be to match the content of your resume as much as possible to the qualifications and duties described in each job notice.

Make It Stand Out

A visually appealing and easy-to-read resume gets attention. Skip the fancy fonts, long paragraphs, and flowered stationary. Use as few words as possible and make creative use of white space, bold letters, sectioning, and bullets. A potential employer should be able to scan over your resume quickly to determine if it deserves a longer look. You want them to notice what's great about your resume, not the color of the paper.

Shift Your Priorities

For each job you apply to, shift items around on your resume so that the first thing any potential employer sees is exactly what they're looking for. If they're specifically looking for someone who speaks Swahili, put it at or near the beginning of your resume (as long as you actually speak it, of course!) It's a simple strategy — the things they want go first, the things that are less appealing or less important to the job go last.

Highlight What's Important

Yes, you are multi-talented and of course, your resume needs to sum up your skills and abilities. However, you don't need to list everything. You just need to let them know what skills you have that are assets for the job.

As far as your education goes, unless you're right out of school, your degree doesn't need to be the first thing people see on your resume. If you've been working for five years or more, list your education last and focus on your skills and accomplishments. However, if you're just starting out, it's perfectly acceptable to list your degrees, as well as your GPA, courses relevant to your job search, and any awards or scholarships you've earned. Any special training you've completed should be included, so long as it's pertinent to the job at hand (so skip the blurb about Clown School if you're applying for an accounting job).

Share Your Story

Job history is important, but to highlight your experience that best relates to the job, a chronological rundown may not always be the best approach. You may want to consider emphasizing what you know instead of what you've done, although in most cases, a job timeline is more than adequate.

Accomplishments you've made on the job could be included in your job history, or they could be highlighted separately on your resume, along with off-the-job accomplishments and any special skills you can bring to the table. Decide how you want to emphasize these aspects of yourself so employers will notice what's most important to them.

Perfecting your resume can be tough, but it really does help to think of it as a marketing tool. Know your audience and tailor your resume to them each time. If you don't, you may not appeal to the people who are reading it. With a little time and patience — and perhaps a little extra advice — you can put together a resume that's sure to get you in the door for an interview. The rest is up to you!

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