

## BUILDING A BETTER RESUME

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Professional résumé writers are in the business of helping you sell yourself to future employers. This is a checklist that many follow in writing or upgrading résumés for their clients. See if your own résumé falls in line with these suggestions:

### **1. *Is your format attractive?***

Why settle for a mundane format when there are literally thousands of others from which you can choose? You can find samples of them all over the internet. Just remember that overall image and the first impression of prospective employers do count, so take the time to pick an eye-pleasing layout.

### **2. *Are you using the traditional chronological format?***

The chronological format will list your most recent experience first and move backwards toward your first job and education. Most recruiters and hiring managers prefer the chronological format. Other formats such as the functional, which focuses on three or four major skills sets rather than when you did what, are much less popular or effective.

### **3. *Did you state your Objective?***

Some inexperienced résumé writers believe that their readers will understand what they want to do just by their present job title or past experience. Or they think that they can fill in the blanks in a cover letter. It is important that the prospective employer knows right up front that you know what you want to do. If you have an additional career objective, then write a second version of your résumé with that in mind.

In addition, it is important to keep your Objective simple and straightforward; e.g., “Corporate Real Estate Management,” “Facilities Management,” “A continuing career in Construction Management,” or the like.

### **4. *Did you insert a Summary of Qualifications?***

A good summary right after your Objective allows you to give the reader a quick outline of what your background encompasses, affords you an opportunity to emphasize your strengths, and provides a helpful lead-in to what follows. It can be presented in a variety of ways—as a list of bulleted items, as a paragraph, or even with a table containing keywords—but it should never take up more than a third of the page.

### **5. *Have you been as concise as possible?***

A chronic problem for novice résumé writers is length. Not wanting to leave anything out, or intent upon filling up the page(s), novices will add all sorts of unnecessary information. They will splice in lofty adjectives about their persona or performance, describe in excruciating detail how they did this or that, or insert trivia. As a result, they end up using far more space than they need to and yet, paradoxically, say less than they could. You must be as brief and concise as possible.

**6. Did you list numerical achievements?**

There is no better way to distinguish yourself from your competitors than by listing quantifiable achievements. Such achievements could include the total amount of real estate you sold last year, how many housing units you have managed or constructed, how much money you saved your company by renegotiating vendor contracts, the value of capital projects you managed, etc. And how do you know what is important and what is not? Simply by asking yourself what would impress your next employer the most.

**7. Have you used keywords?**

More and more companies and executive recruiters are using scanning software to enter incoming résumés into their databases. Then, when they need to fill a position, they key in those words that best describe the candidate they are looking for. Thus, it is imperative that you make every effort to include all those words that you think are representative of the position you are after. Never assume that employers will know that you can do this or that: tell them. And if you can't integrate all such words into the text of your résumé, then add them in a separate paragraph entitled "Additional Keywords."

**8. Have you been overly modest?**

All too often we overlook what would impress those who evaluate our résumés. Strive to make it a point to emphasize the breadth of your duties and responsibilities and the number and size of your achievements. Your goal is to present the best possible picture of you consistent with the truth. We do not lie or exaggerate, but rather make sure that the reader knows what it is about you that sets you apart from other candidates, from as simple a thing as a record of perfect attendance to one as complicated as leading multi-million dollar projects.

**9. Have you separated your duties and responsibilities from your achievements?**

Surprisingly, a lot of do-it-yourselfers jumble them together. Your résumé will have not only a cleaner appearance, but also far more impact if you take the trouble to list your achievements—usually in bullets prefaced by action verbs—after a brief description of your duties and responsibilities. Remember to list your achievements in order of importance.

**10. Do your job titles fairly define your function?**

Make sure that the job title you were given by your company or organization truly reflects what you do and your level of responsibility. If it does not, then use a job title that more accurately describes what you did in terms others can readily understand and appreciate.