Resume Guide

30 seconds. That's all the time you have to capture someone's attention, to make a good impression, AND convince a hiring manager to take a second look at your skills and experience. Get it right and you'll instantly stand out from the crowd. Get it wrong and you can kiss that job goodbye.

So how do you create a resume that works?

While there are many resume "how to" guides out there, few (if any) tell the real story. Our guide is different because it was created from real world experience in technical and executive recruiting. The advice you're about to read is based on our work with hundreds of hiring managers as well as insight gained from reviewing hundreds of thousands of resumes over the past 18 years.

Simply put, this guide will show you how to stand out from the crowd. Keep these tips in mind - your resume is a personal advertisement with one specific purpose: to win an interview.
To achieve this goal, you must edit your resume to fit each unique job opening.
Your resume must also be reader-friendly and well organized.
And, most importantly, your resume must convey expertise relevant to the position.

Rule #1: Size Does Not Matter (But Format Does)

You may have read that your resume should be no longer than one page. That is simply not true. Those days of old are long gone with the creation of computers and cloud storage. Do not worry about the length of your resume. Focus on conveying information that shows why you're the top expert for the job; Leadership skills, specific details on products you've worked with or sold, number of direct reports, $$ of P&L responsibilities etc. If you stay focused and omit extraneous information, your resume length will work out just fine.

At the same time, do concern yourself with the format of your resume. You're designing your resume for both humans and computers. You therefore need to have more than one version of the finished document.

The first version – the one that you use for applying online or through company portals - should be a simple yet well-structured WORD document. **No columns, pictures or graphs** etc…

Keep the fancy and pretty PDF versions for your in-person interviews!

Rule #2: Match Your Resume To The Specific Job

One size does not fit all when it comes to your resume. If you're serious about getting hired, the single most important thing you should do is modify your resume to fit each unique job opportunity. It may sound like overkill, but with only 30 seconds of airtime, your resume has to immediately address the specific expertise that each employer seeks.

Any other experience that is not related to the position should be minimized and make sure to avoid creating gaps in your employment or overlapping dates.

Rule #3: You Must Convey Expertise

The most important thing your resume MUST convey is expertise. Companies do not look for diversity in a candidate. They look for specialized expertise.
It's not about your career objectives, your hobbies, interests or your education.

Here's an example. A manager was looking for a Director of Engineering with an aircraft / aviation background and had 15 resumes on his desk. Five of them were Program Manager's experienced in electrical systems or from the automotive industry; five of them were Engineering Managers experience in mechanical or industrial environments; and five resumes were engineering leaders with Military or VIP aircraft design experience. Who will the manager call for an interview? Without a doubt, the manager will call the five engineers with Military or VIP aircraft design experience, of course. Why? Because their skills best fit his needs. The others won't get a second look.

Rule #4: Add Structure to Your Resume.

Structure adds clarity and organization to your resume. A well-structured resume should include these four key elements: Summary, Education, Skills, and Work Experience.

Section 1: The Summary
Your resume should open with a brief summary of your skills and expertise—and how they match the specific job opportunity. To determine what to write, picture the hiring manager asking you, "In 4-5 sentences tell me how your background fits the role." This section is where you answer that question. You should use all buzzwords that are related to the role. You can bullet specific skills and experience but remember to only include information that is directly related to the role. If your summary is on the mark, the hiring manager will keep reading.

Section 2: Education
Demonstrating your formal education and training is important. Include your degree, discipline / major, college, etc... If you are a very recent graduate, you may want to include your GPA. The purpose of this section is simply to verify your education.

Section 3: Skills
Provide a short-bulleted list of the specific skills that are related to the position. For example, if the job opening is for a digital board designer, then you don't need to mention that you know how to develop Java.

Section 4: Professional Experience
This is the most important section of your resume – so be specific and detailed. Add leadership experience, specific details on products your companies manufactured, worked with or sold, number of direct reports, any $$ of P&L or budgetary responsibilities etc… the more details the better. In this section, outline the projects and responsibilities that directly relate to each position.

Here's how to structure your experience:
Present a chronological outline of your past employers, responsibilities, and accomplishments, starting with your current (or most recent) position.
Include details on what the company's end products are, dates of employment and job titles that relate to your role, and then write two to three sentences that explain your responsibilities in this role. As you write, stay focused. The hiring manager only needs to understand your responsibilities for each position you've held.
Next, list the projects that you lead or developed that relate to each position. Under each project, provide two to three sentences explaining what your responsibilities were and the end results. Only include projects that you directly developed or managed. Be as specific as possible.
As you outline your job titles and experience, be sure to show a growth path of responsibility. Even if you worked for the same company for 25 years, the hiring manager will want to see that you progressed in your career through promotions and increased levels of responsibility.
Being detailed and thorough in developing your Professional Experience section will not only help your resume stand out, it will help you prepare for the employer's phone screen and interview process. By developing a list of your specific skills, experience, responsibilities, expertise and accomplishments—as they relate to the position you're applying for—you'll be ready to answer any question about why you're qualified for the job.

Section 5: Other Qualifications
This last section is optional, and it should include any other relative information like references, publications, professional memberships, etc…