Ten Tips for an Interview Winning Resume

From Susan Heathfield

Four Tips for a Winning Resume

An employer can receive hundreds of resumes in response to an advertised position. For every hundred resumes an employer receives, only a few resumes stand out from the crowd. Want your resume to shine in the eyes of the employer you want to attract? Start by including a well-written resume cover letter with the resume. Then, follow these resume guidelines to create an interview winning resume that is head and shoulders above the crowd.

- **Formatting and feel, on a mailed-in resume, matter.** Your resume, at first glance, can impress or depress the employer. Lots of open space, a clear, easy-to-read font such as 12 point Arial, and easy-to-find and skim information, entice the employer to read on. With electronic publishing, every mailed resume should be freshly printed on high quality paper. And don't even think of sending your application to my company in your current employer's envelope, or with metered postage. Think about what this says about the integrity of the candidate. I receive, at least, one of these a week. Envelopes do matter.
- You will likely grow tired of hearing this but **correct spelling, appropriate grammar, no missing words, and no typing mistakes** make your resume an employer-pleaser right out of the starting gate. An error-free resume is rare. Indeed, some hiring managers will not further consider your candidacy if they find even one mistake. Every mistake makes me pause and think. Every mistake makes me question your carefulness, care, and attention to detail. Don't make me pause; don't make me think.
- **Contact Information:** In this era of instant messaging, email, and cell phones, there is absolutely no reason to make contacting you difficult for the potential employer. Yet, over half the resumes I receive have no contact information except a home phone number. And guess what? You're never home. Give the potential employer your cell phone number, even if you have to buy a mobile for your job search. Avoid the dreaded phone tag that may make you miss out on an interview altogether.
- **Write and customize an "objective" for each job and employer.** The objective is your opportunity to connect your skills, experience, traits, and job requirements with those the employer is seeking. Read the job posting carefully and you can pick out exactly what the employer believes he needs. Don't settle for a lame, "I seek a challenging opportunity to utilize my skills with a progressive employer who will provide opportunities for growth."

  In response to an ad for a marketing specialist, I received this customized objective: "I am seeking a position as a marketing specialist in a growing, environmentally conscious company that will utilize my current skills in the development of advertising and other marketing materials and website design and writing. At the same time, I hope to gain experience in market research, Internet competitive analysis, and market segmentation." Who do you think I called?

Here are six more tips for an interview winning resume.

- **Include a customized section called "Career Highlights / Qualifications."** This section of the resume is usually a series of bulleted points that emphasize your most important career experience, your skills, your personality traits and characteristics, and some key accomplishments from your work history as they relate to the job for which you are applying.
- **For each former employer, clearly indicate the company name, your position, and the dates of your employment.** Provide a brief overview statement that tells me about what the company does, its sales, products, and customers. This helps me assess your experience. Then, tell me exactly what you did for the company in a brief statement. Don't make me look for information, read between the lines, or try to guess. I won't and your resume will end up in the dreaded job file

for the required year. (You don't really think anyone takes the time to sort through all those aging resumes, do you?)

- **For each employer, include a list of "key contributions" or "key achievements."** Don't make the mistake of stating, "I answered a multi-line phone system. I provided customer service." You want to highlight key measurable achievements and successes such as: "I reduced the time for order fulfillment from 2 days to 12 hours." "I reduced accounts collectible by 80 percent." "My marketing campaign for the new product won two industry awards for effectiveness."
- **Education statements matter.** State dates of attendance, majors, minors, and degrees. Don't make me guess whether you have a degree or just took a few classes. I will figure it out and it ticks me off to have to figure it out.
- **Do include a section that lists awards and other recognition.** President of the Junior Class, Secretary of the Synchronized Swim Team, four year merit scholarship winner, or college economics prize winner will catch my eye much faster than a resume without awards and recognition. (Of course, you'd include this section on a resume only if you have an award or recognition to list.)
- **Do include a personal section that highlights accomplishments**, and anything else that will raise the value of you, as a potential employee, in the eyes of the employer. In this section, catching my eye recently are: volunteerism; involvement with philanthropic causes; publications; team and individual sports participation; leadership positions in school or community organizations (especially in resumes without an "Awards and Recognition" section) or even, "I self-funded my college education by working part-time during all four years of school."

Well, this is my best advice about what catches my attention – positively – in a resume. I can't speak for every employer, but know that you can't go far wrong – and you may go far in the right direction - if you heed these recommendations. When your resume is competing with hundreds of others for attention, you need to do the right things right to be heard above the noise. You can create a winning resume.