

## HOW TO WRITE A "SEE ME FIRST" RESUME

The role of the resume has changed in the past decade. In the “good old days”, it was a seller's market. Jobs were relatively abundant, and individuals could pretty much choose the job they wanted. In many cases, companies were not able to get “exact fits” when hiring – an ad might draw 40-50 responses, and if you were not too far off the requirements for the job, you stood a good chance of getting at least an interview. In those days, what mattered most in the resume was **CONTENT**.

Now, however, things have changed. It is clearly a buyer's market. Jobs are relatively scarce, and because each job remaining in our “lean and mean” companies is so crucial to the success of the organization, the “fit” when hiring must be exact. These days, an ad on the internet may draw 500 to 1,000 responses. And with time at a premium, the hiring authority cannot possibly read them all. He/she has to reduce the pile arbitrarily to a manageable 20-30 to be read.

Thus, the goal of the reader when taking a “first pass” through the resume pile is not to “read to accept,” but rather to “skim to reject.” What matters most here in the first pass is not content but **FORMAT**. Your resume must be so clearly laid out and so compelling to read, that it literally forces itself to be moved to the “to be read” pile. Only then will content become important again.

Remember, the role of the resume is not to get you a job, but simply to get you an interview. It must quickly tell the interviewer that you are a “good fit” for the job, given your previous work and your future aspirations. And it must clearly point out why you are potentially better than any of the other candidates. To do this, it must answer five questions:

- **What does this person want to do?**
- **What has this person done in the past?**
- **How well has s/he done these things?**
- **What education or training has s/he had?**
- **How can I reach him/her if interested?**

If your resume is laid out so clearly that the reader can get these answers in a 20 second skim, you have a good shot at getting that interview.

### Format

Now, let's get specific about format. Your resume should be on a maximum of three pages (two if possible). Make sure you are using a fairly common program like MS Word, so that your emailed version will be able to be opened and displayed the way you want it by the majority of readers.

If you are submitting a printed copy, it should be on white or light coloured good quality bond paper, stapled in the top left corner. Fancy covers and bindings take up space in the hiring authority's file, and are not appreciated. And unusual colours (e.g. grey, hot pink, etc.) do not look tasteful or professional, and do not copy well if the interviewer is sufficiently impressed with your file to want to circulate it.

The resume should be laid out in point form wherever possible, with headings to draw the reader's eyes. It is appropriate to use some special printing effects like **bolding** and underlining to reinforce special content like achievements.

## **Content**

Regarding content, start with a title block, including your name, address, the best telephone number to reach you (be it your home, mobile or work) and your email address (answering Question 5). You should then include a brief career goal or objective (answering Question 1), which can be tailored to the specific opportunity. Next, cover work experience, most recent first, with dates of employment. It is essential to be both honest and complete in this area. You should include all your jobs, even though you will highlight just the most recent and the most relevant.

The description of your job experience should clearly outline both your responsibilities (answering Question 2) and your achievements (answering Question 3). When citing achievements, use action verbs like “saved \$200,000 by eliminating...”, “reduced DSO’s by 10 days by...” or “grew sales by 15%”.

You should then outline your education, special skills (e.g. computer literacy), and any significant professional development courses you have taken (answering Question 4). Don’t list references on your resume, as these may be contacted indiscriminately, before you really need them. And do not include any personal information like age, date or place of birth, marital status, health, SIN, etc. which could potentially limit your ability to get an interview.

By following these guidelines, your resume will give you a much better chance of getting that all-important first interview. The rest is up to you!

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