

Career Builders

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The Truth about Resumes

The number one truth about resumes is that people hate to write them. The second truth about resumes is that they have never gotten a person hired. The truth is that creating your resume can drive you crazy. To avoid this condition you must have a clear understanding of both the resume's purpose and your own career aspirations.

A resume will not get you hired, but it will get you an interview. When you are looking for a job you become a sales person, and the product you are selling is you. You should think of your resume as a full-page advertisement. When sales teams put together their ads, the first thing they do is learn everything there is to know about their product, both good and bad. Writing a resume forces you to do the same thing. You must develop a positive, yet objective, understanding of your skills, abilities, and personal strengths.

At the Career Center, we hear many reasons from customers about why they hate to write resumes. The explanation can be as simple as the fact that they do not believe they have a work history with enough experience to fill a page-long document. The rationale can also be at the opposite extreme, in which they say they have so much experience in so many areas they just can't sort it all out. On occasion, their problem stems from a blemish or gap in their work history that they don't know how to explain.

Our response to all of these complaints, and to any others that you can come up with, is always the same: the reason you don't want to write your resume is the very same reason that you need one. If you can honestly figure out what you hate about writing your resume, then you are on your way to figuring out any obstacles you may need to overcome to reach your employment goals. Going through the process of writing your resume is a great way to prepare yourself for the rest of the job search process. A good resume can act as your guide for finding job leads, handling interviews, and negotiating employment offers.

The first section of a quality resume is the "Career Objective". You need to know what your career goals are so that you are able to tell employers the type of job you really want. You cannot be vague. Saying you want a job "with stability and growth potential" will not get you anywhere. Everyone wants that, including the employer you are trying to impress. It is like the old saying, "If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else". If you don't know what kind of job you want, you are probably not going to like what you get.

The next two sections of your resume should be a "Qualifications Summary" and an "Employment History". The summary section is where you provide a list of four to six bulleted statements that highlight your strongest skills and most impressive accomplishments. Many people have a difficult time with this section. This can be especially true for recent graduates, career changers, and people who are reentering the workforce. The thing to remember is that it does not matter where or how you developed your skills or gained experience, it only matters that you recognize your own accomplishments.

We have a special trick we like to use to help people write their "Qualifications" and "Work History" sections. It is a website called the Occupational Information Network (<http://online.onetcenter.org>). On this site you can type in any job title and get a detailed

listing of the job tasks performed, the skills and abilities needed, and the tools and technologies used for that occupation. You can use this information to jog your memory and help you identify the skills and experience you have from your previous jobs. You can then do a comparison to find out which of those skills are related to the job you are currently going after.

The only cautionary note you need to keep in mind is not to plagiarize. You need to take these skills and tasks and make them your own. You do this by adding specifics. For example, if the website says “data entry on specialized software” then you should say, “Able to learn various accounting software packages and perform data entry tasks quickly and with a 99% accuracy level”. No matter what the statement you should always try to add something that quantifies your skills. Numbers, dollars, and percentages give your experience punch.

The final section of your resume depends on your personal situation. If you have any education beyond the high school level then you should list it. This includes licenses, certifications and degrees. If you have a hobby, volunteer experience, or an internship placement related to your goal then it should also be in your resume.

Your resume should never be over two pages long; because the truth is, you are just not that interesting. You will be lucky if an employer spend 30 seconds reviewing your resume before deciding if they want to meet you. And, that is the hard truth about resumes.

For more information on the services available through the Workforce New York Career Center, visit our website at www.columbiagreeenworks.org, or call 828-4181 ext. 5510.