

Does Your Resume Sparkle?

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Part 1

This is the first in a series of articles highlighting the keys to writing a sparkling resume. Each article presents one or more keys to creating a professional and effective resume that generates interviews.

Does it sparkle or sleep in a pile of other resumes?

Does it accurately communicate the values you've delivered and the talents you possess? Resumes are marketing documents with the sole purpose of generating interest in you that results in job interviews.

Accomplishments and Skills

Professional resumes highlight accomplishments you've achieved and the skills you possess. Highlight several key accomplishments for each position. Each position on your resume should include the company, a descriptive title of your responsibilities and dates worked (start and end dates). Below the position title, summarize your responsibilities in the first several sentences. Then list several specific accomplishments you achieved.

Action Words

Resume sentences with the most impact begin with action verbs. Action verbs are words that communicate action and normally end in "ed". Even though such words are the past tense of verbs, research shows that using such language conveys action. A few examples of action words are listed below.

- achieved, acquired, adapted, addressed, administered, analyzed, assisted, audited
- calculated, centralized, changed, collaborated, conducted, constructed
- demonstrated, designed, developed, devised, discovered

Objectives

Your professional objective should be short and to the point. Describe what type of positions and industries you are interested in. If you do not include an objective resume readers will assume you are seeking a position similar to your most recent position. Objectives are also important when you are seeking to change careers or industries.

Part 2

This is the second in a series of articles highlighting principles for writing a sparkling resume. Each article presents one or more keys to creating a professional and effective resume that generates interviews.

How Resumes are Read

Resumes are rarely read. Resumes are first scanned, usually by HR (Human Resources), in about 10 seconds per resume. HR scans hundreds of resumes daily and does not have the time to read resumes in detail. You're competing for the reader's. If a quick scan captures the reader's interest they read it in detail.

Resume reviewers first scan your resume looking at the positions you've held and the companies you've worked for, scanning from company/position to company/position. This is why it is important to use descriptive titles for the positions you've held.

Descriptive Position Titles

When your assigned position title does not accurately communicate your duties, substitute a more descriptive and accurate title. Using descriptive titles helps communicate your experience and responsibilities rapidly. Make sure to use descriptive titles that accurately reflect your responsibilities.

Keywords

Reviewers also look for keywords related to specific position they're screening your resume against. You can influence how the reader scans by selectively bolding or underlining words you want to highlight. Highlighting keywords in this manner helps focus the reader's eye. Highlight only those parts of your background that most correlate to the position you are seeking.

Your Resume has Two Audiences

After your resume is scanned by (HR), it goes to the hiring manager. Hiring managers invest more time scanning and reading each resume. Hiring managers are looking for compelling reasons why they should interview you. They're also looking for reasons not to interview you. Hence, be sure to highlight accomplishments you've achieved so the reader can visualize the results you can achieve for them.

Chronological versus Functional

Most resume readers prefer reverse chronological resumes. This format presents your most recent experience first. When you have several positions on your resume, it is effective to add a "Summary" heading on the resume. The "Summary" provides a professional summary of your experience and pulls together the talents you've developed over several positions. When using a chronological resume format, important experience may not appear until the end of your resume where it will be missed by most resume readers.

Functional resumes that present your skills, knowledge and talents are more common for management and above positions. Even with functional resumes, it is important to list positions held in reverse chronological order.

Accuracy

Interviewers will review your resume with you at the interview so be prepared to elaborate on the experience you highlight. Many articles have postulated that 80% of resumes contain some inaccuracies. Interviewers use resume accuracy to measure truthfulness. Craft resume wording as positively as possible while remaining truthful.

Resume Length

One page resumes are appropriate for individuals with 3 years experience or less. The one page resume rule is very out-dated and not appropriate for most professionals. 2 to 3 page resumes are very common and appropriate for individuals with 3 or more years of experience. The size of margins (top, bottom, left and right) will significantly affect resume length. Font type and size also great effect resume length. Use font sizes of at least 10 point. This is the minimum that most people can comfortably read. 11 point font is best for most resumes.