

## 6 Ways Employers Recommend to Improve Your Resume

by Robin Ryan

A successful Human Resources Manager, with years of hiring experience, told me: "A resumé is nothing more than a slick piece of advertisement. But, a very important piece. In a few seconds employers decide your fate based on what they glean from your resumé." In fact, you get about 20 seconds, according to the national survey of 600 hiring managers and human resources personnel that I conducted. Here are some of those findings:

**1. Always have a Summary of Qualifications.** To many hiring managers, the most important part of your resumé is your Summary of Qualifications section. Adding this triples your impact. Employers reported that this was one of the very first areas they read. This section usually consists of 4-6 sentences that present an overview of your experience, talents, skills and work habits, and is a highly influential summation of what you bring to the job. Since most job candidates DON'T use this important, eye-catching section, I never write a resumé without it--it's much too valuable. Let me show you an example from one of my client's resúmes:

### **SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

*Nine years management experience in human resources dealing with two fast paced, rapidly expanding high tech companies. Expertise includes employment law, recruiting, compensation packages, employee and labor relations, and establishing workplace policies and procedures. Recognized for displaying excellent problem-solving skills and for developing employees' professional growth and productivity.*

The Summary of Qualifications area, consolidates the best you have to bring to the job. It really stands out and pulls the employer in for a closer look. Be sure that your resumé has this essential section.

**2. Demonstrate results.** Employers in the survey said vague, general resúmes don't cut it. Use the "action = results" formula to create a high-impact tool. This is the specific formula where you show what was achieved in past jobs, especially bottomline contributions like saving time or money.

Instead of saying "I managed the team" for example, it's more effective to elaborate and say: "Managed the entire financial restructuring of department, and the results decreased staff & overhead, saving \$90,000 annually." Be as positive as possible without exaggerating or misstating the truth. Note wherever possible how your actions brought about some positive results and accomplishments at your past employer--that's what gets attention.

**3. One page works best.** Since most resumés are only allotted a 15-20 second review, don't waste precious seconds by using too many pages. You forget there's a cover letter to look at too, so consolidate your top abilities into one page. Be sure to emphasize the last 5 to 7 years, which most interest employers. We asked the employers on our survey which they preferred - 1, 2, or 3 pages? Everyone said no more than two pages, even for top executives.

Many stated that one page is best. Hands down, for staff positions and new graduates, one page was the top preference. Managers, professionals and executives could go into two pages; but often those with 20+ years of experience faced a serious problem when they elected to use a two page version. "Be crisp and focused," advised Joseph, a Department Director.

"Give me good info in an organized manner. Don't make me search for anything." Many other hiring managers echoed his words. Too often a longer resumé is not a BETTER resumé. Employers are interested in your abilities to manage and lead today, not in reading about irrelevant facts or outdated skills acquired during your early working years.

**4. Target each resumé to the job title sought.** "Job hunters send resumés in with no idea about the position. They mail in for anything and everything under the sun. No wonder they fail. It's the short, concise, one page resumé with bullet-by-bullet accomplishments showing you can do the job that's the best way to impress me," says Jean, a Senior Executive and head of a large department. Target each resumé to the job title sought. Even if you qualify for several different positions, it's better to create a different resumé for each job, incorporating only the information pertinent to doing that specific job. This will eliminate the tendency to crowd your resumé with too much non-related information. Support your abilities, accomplishments and past experiences with specifics to make your resumé stand out. Mention any innovations, changes or actions (especially time & cost savings) that show you can take on the job and produce desired results.

**5. Format matters.** Your resumé must catch the reader's eye. "Professional, easy-to-read formats are essential," noted several executive hiring managers, "one that is visually appealing which suggests your professionalism, is an often overlooked but important component." Do not use micro-size type, and be sure to allow for lots of white space and borders. Make use of italicizing, CAPITALS, underlining, bolding, indentations, and bullets to emphasize important points. (Note: scannable resumés have different guidelines.) Print your resumé on white or cream high-quality paper using a crisp laser printer.

**6. Avoid the "killer boo boos".** Hands down, the "numero uno" mistake with every manager and HR person in our survey was spelling mistakes and typos. Many said: "I stop reading when I find spelling mistakes." Typos scream 'Don't hire me'. Proofread! Perfection is a necessity. And don't trust computer spell checkers. Don't use "I" in your resumé. Instead, start each sentence with an action verb. Descriptive action verbs - such as established, analyzed, implemented, created, streamlined, organized - add power to

your sentences. And don't include personal information about marital status, gender, height, weight, or health since it's an outdated style and violates discrimination laws.

Your resumé can open doors for new employment opportunities - put in the time and effort to make yours great.

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