For Your Resume
Building Blocks

by Executive Director Nancy Savage (1977-2011)

Writing a Resume

The goal of a resume is to simply make you stand out as a more desirable candidate than the competition. Of course, your competition has the same goal. Preparing a generic resume is not the end game in your future job search, but it is a starting document to put together in a recognizable format the building blocks we discussed last month. (See Box of the Building Blocks of a Resume below.) Your resume must be personal and it must present you as a great match for the individual posted position. The thought behind a generic resume is to provide a format and assemble the basic information into a one- or two-page document. This resume will have to be revised to fit each announcement, but it gives you a tremendous leg up in resume preparation when you finally are in a position to submit a resume or hopefully have a potential employer ask for a resume before any job is even posted.

Write to stand out. The hiring manager will have numerous resumes to review and you do not want to use the valuable space to list skills that are expected and are not singular to you. If what you write applies to almost everyone, then you have placed yourself in the middle of the pack. One of the ways to stand out is through a compelling Career Objective Statement or a Professional Philosophy Statement. These should be carefully constructed to be clearly personal about you as an individual and what you can bring to the organization. You must seize the reader's attention within the first few seconds. The opening sentence must be followed by a portrayal of your potential value to the organization. Let's face it — the hiring manager looks at a lot of resumes — make your statement interesting and memorable.

A resume is not a position description and should not read like one, detailing elements of the job or required skills. Tell what you did in your prior assignments and the accomplishments and awards that were a result of your actions. Use items already crafted from your Professional Experience Inventory and plug them in. (For more details, see last month's Article "For Your Resume – Building Blocks.") Employers need to quickly understand your work experience and qualifications and the bullets from your inventory should fill the bill.

Contact Information — full name, city where you reside, email address and phone numbers. This information is personal so be cautious about whom you share your resume with. Employers want to know where you reside and how to get in touch.

List relevant educational degrees and certifications. If you are seeking an accounting or audit job, your Certified Public Accountant certification is critical and should be listed up front. If your desired occupation requires international travel, your foreign language skills should be front and center.

Building Blocks of a Resume

☑   Decide the Type of Post-Bureau Career that you want to pursue
☑ Make a list of Awards
☑ Make a list of your job-related skills
☑ Prepare a Professional Inventory
☑ Prepare a Generic Version of your Resume

Resume Tips

These are tips that will serve you well.

Consistency

Be consistent in the opening words for bullets, whether you use verbs or nouns. Maintain a consistent person and tense.

Use of Person Pronouns

Resumes should not include personal pronouns such as he, his, she, her, I, or me.

Requested Length of Resume

Check length requirement and adhere to the requirements. Your resume should be only two pages in length. Some organizations require that submitted resumes be only one page.

File Format

Choose the right file format. Since so many resumes are processed through an Applicant Tracking System (ATS), it is recommended that you choose a .docx or PDF format to ensure your file will be easily read by the system. Neither of these is the default option when you are saving a document. To choose the file format for your resume, click on File, Save As, and find the "Format" field. From a dropdown menu, you can select .docx or PDF.

Keywords

Many companies use ATS software. ATSs review resumes and cover letters for key words that are used in the job description and/or job announcement. A careful review of the job description or announcement will reveal key words that are actually requirements such as "Certified Public Accounting" or "CPA" or "accounting experience." It is important to make a list of listed key words for each posted position and then make sure that your resume and cover letter incorporate those keys words. This is not going to be as important in a generic resume, but the incorporation of key words is critical when responding to a job announcement. If the keys words are not incorporated, when the ATS software parses the submitted written material, your application may not make it to a hiring manager's desk. Mirroring their key words in your resume reinforces that you are a strong candidate for this position and would also be a good fit within the organizational culture. This does not mean mirroring the job description, just the key words.

Edit

Review your initial draft in the context of skills and experience it should address. Those hiring are looking to ensure that you can perform the functions of their position in a different organizational culture than the FBI. Does your text flow logically? Review it from the perspective of the person reviewing the resume. After you have reviewed the initial draft, add, delete, or adjust information as needed. You may need to rearrange items.

Proofread

Proofreading cannot be overemphasized. Once you have made it through the steps set forth above, it is critical that you proofread your resume so that you do not miss spelling errors, typos, grammatical errors, or other details that could undermine your work. Review your resume multiple times, line by line, word by word. Beware of redundancy, a frequent error in proofreading. No one can proofread their own work in the same manner as someone fresh to the material — so ask a mentor or other respected individual to proofread. This final step of ensuring accuracy demonstrates a commitment to excellence that future employers will expect.

Next month: Preparing a tailored resume for a specific job announcement.

Chapter CHALLENGE Donations

DELMARVA

On March 15th, the Delmarva chapter donated $25 to the Foundation General Fund in memory of Philip Livingston.

INDIANA

On March 23rd the Indiana chapter donated $75 to the Foundation's Martyrs and Remembrance Fund in memory of Robert D. Harbourn.

HUDSON VALLEY

On March 28th, the Hudson Valley chapter donated $100 to the Foundation's General Scholarship Fund in memory of Daniel Blake and $100 to the Foundation's General Scholarship Fund in memory of Thomas O'Connor.