

## AVOID THE RESUME TEMPLATE!

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For many job seekers, even at the senior level, the thought of having to write their own resume can be frightening, and it is no wonder that those unfamiliar in the art of resume writing can turn to what seems almost to be a life saver – the resume template. The market is flooded with many forms of resume templates; templates included with standard word software programs, or even as software which provides a wizard that allows the user to replace and personalize standard sections and headings.

A template can often be a great place to begin the initial information collation process; however I would caution candidates relying solely on them for layout, structure, wording, content and particularly, the end product. Imagine the recruiter who is required to sift through hundreds of resumes on a daily basis; day in and day out, being presented with applications that follow the same formatting and layout as the next. The general consensus of numerous resume articles concludes that a resume must be visually appealing so that at a glance the reader's curiosity and interest is captivated. Unfortunately candidates who opt to be restricted within the limitations of an inflexible resume template or wizard will fail to create a distinct and unique document that distinguishes them from their competitors.

Most templates or wizards provide you with standardized formats, namely chronological, functional or combination; so how are you going to know which format will suit your particular circumstances? The functional resume (which emphasizes job functions and is therefore skill based) is generally frowned upon by recruiters as they can raise potential screening factors with questions as to what the candidate is trying to hide? The chronological resume (or reverse chronological) is fine when your job target pertains directly to the previous five or so years of experience, but what happens in a situation such as career change? The combination adds a little more creativity in that it combines the functional and chronological formatting, however unless you know which pieces of information are crucial to your overall campaign you can either provide too much information, not enough, or dismally fail to portray your candidacy with style.

While there are no real hard and fast rules about the formatting of a resume, what is important to remember is to customize your resume to your specific career target, with experience, education and achievements provided focusing on that target. Unfortunately, if relying on a resume template, candidates can fail to achieve this, often providing irrelevant details or non-accomplishment driven data. Remember that the upper 1/3 section of the first page is the first thing people will read, so this section is vital. Don't be tempted to include a boring 'objective', which many templates include in that area. An objective concentrates on what you want, and candidates lose the opportunity of showcasing what you can offer the prospective employer by providing a professional overview, or profile.

When developing your resume think in terms of accomplishments and contributions rather than standard job responsibilities. Advertising companies realise that when promoting a product to prospective buyers, they need to portray a solution to a need. In this case, the employer's need is to fill a position, and you are the solution to that need and therefore have to portray this in your resume by 'selling it' and 'not telling it'. I can almost guarantee that your competitors will also list these abilities, so in order to differentiate and enhance your competencies and candidacy, the initiatives and solutions you implemented to overcome challenges needs to be addressed.

Let's reflect on some great techniques to get the creative juices flowing:

Compile information that relates to your career goal, including professional experience, education, and professional associations.

Revisit your professional experience (employment history) and identify PAR situations. That includes problems you were faced with; actions that you took to overcome these challenges; and the results that you secured. These can be bulleted for extra effect and placed directly beneath your job scope. Remember to infuse some creativity in your writing. You are aiming for demonstrable and concise paragraphs; not a long shopping-list of accountabilities.

Formatting should be professional and consistent. Replace an uninspiring career objective with a profile summary and include a bulleted list of quantifiable statements of achievements that are transferable directly to the position being applied for.

Lastly, ensure that your document is error free – even a dynamically-written document can be tossed aside due to spelling errors and careless oversights.

For candidates who want to make a great first impression by infusing a little creativity with the wording and formatting will ensure that their resume will stand out with style when compared to the many other mediocre template-based resumes.

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