



Career Directors International

Toast of the Resume Industry (TORI) Competition Tips

TIP #1 - Make Your Resume Sexy

Is your resume entry sexy? If you look at prior [TORI-winning resumes](#), one of the things they have in common is that they look good, model-good. Sexy might seem like a funny word to use, but let's face it, they're very attractive and eye-catching so they stand out - to competition judges and employers.

What might make your resume sexier:

- Inserting a chart or table to visually depict results.
- Including a quote that pops from the text.
- Introducing a touch of color with headers or lines.
- Using subtle borders or lines.
- Including a little bit of bolding and italics.
- Increasing font sizes minimally for content such as job titles and company names.
- Using text boxes and similar design elements, but with restraint.
- Looking at the overall page for use of white space - 'align this' and 'indent that'.
- Breaking up heavy content like long lists of bullets with categories or titles.

"There is a road from the eye to the heart that does not go through the intellect."

- Gilbert Keith Chesterton

TIP #2 - Go for the Hook with Content

The second trait that [TORI-winning resumes](#) have in common is that they use language with the purpose of hooking the readers and getting them excited to learn more. Many entries have the common problem of having text and word choice that is too repetitive or just too passive.

What might give you the hook and make your content sing:

- Creating a summary / overview section that sizzles with bottom-line value. What can this person do for the company that will make a big difference that the other candidates don't emphasize? If you can play up bottom-line elements that all companies seek such as making or saving money, all the better.
- Starting job descriptions with the challenge or goal of the position instead of just jumping into bullet responsibilities / accomplishments.
- Moving from passive to active word choices. Instead of 'responsible for' go with 'challenged to'. Instead of 'did this' say 'spearheaded this'. Get out your thesaurus and familiarize yourself with alternative words. You can find one in MS Word under, tools, then language, or go to www.thesaurus.com. NOTE: It's not about big 50 cent words, it's about words with power.

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug."

- Mark Twain

TIP #3 - The Third Big Nomination Killer

I've outlined the need to throw out dull visual presentations and passive, blah content. But, you may be surprised to know that the common error is the final big killer of a TORI nomination.

As the former Director of Awards, I was asked to present a session on, "How to Win a TORI Award" for CDI's 2nd annual conference in 2003. I went back and analyzed the entries to see what the killers were. I was amazed at just how many common errors were made, the kind employers hate and judges do too. I ended up running a workshop that was great fun and a big eye-opener about how easy it is to lose out on a nomination because you didn't proofread enough or make the resume friendly enough.

Here are the common errors to avoid:

- Paragraphs masquerading as bullets. If your 'bullet' is more than 3 or maybe 4 lines long, face it, it's a paragraph. You are going to lose your reviewer. Consider using sub-bullets or breaking it down into multiple bullets.
- Run on sentences. Need I say more?
- Inconsistent use of punctuation - 'here a serial comma' and 'there no serial comma'.
- Over-use of underlining, bolding, and/or capitalization - these make your resume hard to read and can inhibit scannability.
- Dangling widows and orphans - if you have one word on a line by itself from a bullet or paragraph, rewrite to fix it. If you have 1-2 lines (only) from a job on the preceding page, rewrite your content or change your layout to fix this.
- Inconsistent use of numbers in how they are written.
- Repetitive word use (could be in one sentence or just throughout the resume).
- Use of weak verbs and verb phrases such as responsible for, did, got, etc.
- Incorrect capitalization.
- SPELLING ERRORS, yes, spelling errors.
- Inconsistent verb tense.
- Inconsistent sentence starts in a bullet series (this one starts with a verb, the next an adjective, and the next a noun).
- Bad font choices - incompatible with other systems, bullet symbols change into question marks, letters touch too closely for scannability or are just not readable. Also, fonts for body text that are just too small!

"Excellence always sells."

- Earl Nightingale

"Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren't used to an environment where excellence is expected."

- Steve Jobs

TIP #4 - How to Get Free TORI Entries

Yes, you can actually get buy-one-get-one-free TORI registration this year while improving your chances of winning at the same time. All you have to do is take advantage of CDI's TORI Master Mentor Training program with Laura DeCarlo (yes, me).

The program is 100% customized to YOUR specific needs and I'll rapidly help you identify them and ramp up. Consider what a few participants have had to say about the experience:

"Laura DeCarlo may be the highest-powered career exec out there, but she really gets down to earth with her TORI mentor training."

I recently completed the mentoring series and received value far exceeding my investment.

She showed me new nooks and crannies of the resume, subtle work-arounds for cover letters, and hints on client relationships that I put to use the same day.

Laura shared the closely held secrets to winning TORIs, but more important, her knowledge will benefit my clients and my business for years."

- Jeri Hird Dutcher, CPRW - Workwrite

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"TORI mentor training with Laura DeCarlo is like having Ina Garten (The Barefoot Contessa) cook her favorite recipes with you. You know from the outset that it's going to be insightful, interactive, and intended to teach you things that will distinguish you.

Laura mixes her gift with humor with powerful tools and examples that demonstrate her points while delivering practical and powerful tidbits to take away and nibble on later."

- Cheryl Milmoie, ACRW - Career Management Solutions

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Learn more about the [TORI Master Mentor training program](#).

"It's what you learn after you know it all that counts."

- Attributed to Harry S. Truman

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

- Benjamin Franklin

TIP #5 - Did you know you could do this?

I was talking to a member last week in a TORI Master Mentor Training session and she was sharing all the fantastic data the client wouldn't let her include in the resume that she wanted to use. I had a surprise for her that I have for you:

You can change a resume from the way it looked when the client used it or just based on what you know now about formatting and wording that you didn't know then! In fact, it's probably a really positive element because it will allow you to further fictionalize the resume from what the client has used.

What's important is that YOU write and design the resume, but taking an old resume with good bones that has potential and making it what it could be with what you know now is A-OK as you are simply showing your skill and strength as a resume writer. It's still your talent the judges are going to see!

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have mastered, you will never grow.

- C.R. Lawton

"Perfection does not exist - you can always do better and you can always grow.

- Les Brown

TIP #6 - The Big Competition is now the Judge

Based on the calls and emails I have received over the years, I have news that will have some of you dancing in your chairs. We've moved some of your toughest competition for TORI nominations and wins into judge and award director roles for 2010! While new competition is always stepping up to the plate in the TORI competition, these individuals have proven tough to beat:

Sharon Williams - JobRockit.com:

World's Best Resume Writer Competition - 1st place
Toast of the Resume Industry (TORI) - 13 nominations, 7 1st place awards, 5 years of competing

Gayle Howard - Top Margin Career Marketing - 2010 TORI Award Director:

World's Best Resume Writer Competition - 3rd place
Toast of the Resume Industry (TORI) - 47 nominations, 19 1st place awards, 3 2nd place awards, 4 3rd place awards, 9 years of competing

Barbara Safani - Career Solvers:

Toast of the Resume Industry (TORI) - 19 nominations, 2 1st place awards, 2 2nd place awards, 1 3rd place award, 3 years of competing

Tamara Dowling - SeekingSuccess.com:

Toast of the Resume Industry (TORI) - 5 nominations, 1 1st place award, 1 3rd place award, 2 years of competing

Laura Labovich - Aspire! Empower! Career Strategy Group:

Toast of the Resume Industry (TORI) - 4 nominations, 1 3rd place award, 3 years of competing

Plus, we keep you from having to compete against some of the industry's more talented writers by making them judges as well. The 2010 judge lineup includes:

- **Susan Guarneri** - Resume-Magic.com / AssessmentGoddess.com
- **Marty Weitzman** - Gilbert Resumes
- **Cheryl L. Simpson** - Executive Resume Rescue
- **Susan P. Joyce** - Job-Hunt.org
- **Robin Schlinger** - Robin's Resumes
- **Laura Drew** - Carolina Career Coach
- **Tony Deblauwe** - HR4Change

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."

- Les Brown

TIP #7 - Not Always a Winner Overnight

As I was looking over the last tip I realized something important that needed to be pointed out - not everyone is an overnight success at getting nominated or winning the TORIs. Too often we just see the results:

"In 2008 this person won five awards. Who is she? I could never beat her!"

We don't realize that in 2005 that person entered and wasn't nominated at all....

In 2006 she was nominated three times and no wins...

In 2007, again, nominated with no wins...

In 2008, nominated with a 2nd place win, and then...

WHAM in 2009, FIVE AWARDS."

The reality is that the TORIs are a breeding ground for excellence. If at first you don't succeed, learn from it, and try again. That's how those who didn't win at first began to win - they became better writers from the experience of learning from their competitor peers.

Don't get caught with stars in your eyes of who that winner is today; one of my favorite quotes, "She was an overnight success and it took seven years." While some writers will win on the very

first try, it's not that common. You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain by entering! You could surprise yourself, or simply put yourself on the path to a higher level of excellence.

Need help improving your writing? Check out our [TORI Master Mentor training program](#).

"Many of life's failures are people who do not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."

- Thomas Edison

"While one person hesitates because he feels inferior.... the other is busy making mistakes and becoming superior."

- Henry C. Link

"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."

- Darrell Royal

TIP #8 - What You Tell Your Clients: No Excuses

When it comes to entering the TORIs do you hear yourself saying, "I'm too busy"... "I don't have the time this year"... "I'm not ready"??

Really? Let's look at this in the context of what we tell our clients who hesitate to make the investment in a resume:

"Can you afford to wait?"..."Do you want to find yourself in this same position a year from now?"
"How quickly will your time and investment be paid back with this assistance?"....

We know what a major difference that a resume and job search campaign can DO for our clients!

But, are you clear on what a TORI award or nomination can do for your career? If you haven't read my letter entitled [The Resume Writers #1 Secret to Explosive Business Growth](#), take a moment to do so now. If you have, then you know that just being nominated for a TORI award has been the magic bullet for many resume writers to exponentially grow their businesses.

So, you need to ask yourself:

"Can you afford to wait?"..."Do you want to find yourself in this same position a year from now?"
"How quickly will your time and investment be paid back?"....

It doesn't matter when you do it, but that you do it. One long night or a Saturday glued to the computer could CHANGE YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR LIFE FOREVER.

Don't make excuses but instead go for the gold this year. It could result in the least expensive, quickest, and most successful marketing you ever do for your business.

"Ninety-nine percent of failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses."

- George Washington Carver

TIP #9 - One Question to Improve Your Resume Writing

I know there are only seven days left to register for the 2010 TORIs, but I could not resist sharing with you the #1 tip I end up giving with every resume writer I mentor and coach in the TORI Master Mentor Program:

If you do nothing else, add asking the following question to your resume interviews or questionnaires...Here we go:

"Let's set the stage for what you accomplished in this position. When you joined this company (or were promoted to this position) what did you step into? For example, was this a new position or division? If so, what were the goals or expectations that were set? Did you step into a disaster, replacing someone who didn't pull his/her weight? What were you faced with in the new job? etc., etc."

This can open the door to learning information that dramatically changes the hook I mentioned in tip #2. For instance, it sounds great that your client, "Increased sales by 300%, improved customer retention from 34% to 87%, and landed 10 new corporate accounts valued at \$2 million."

HOWEVER, it really sings when you can lead off with, "Recruited to turnaround 4-year sales slump in an ever-increasingly competitive telecommunications marketplace. Challenged to attain results with 50% budget cut and 30% reduction of staff. Overcame all company expectations to increase sales by 300%, improve customer retention from 34% to 87%, and land 10 new corporate accounts valued at \$2 million in just 16 months."

Can you hear the difference that just one question can make in your information gathering??

"Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers."

- Tony Robbins

TIP #10 - Go for the Big Win

Ever wonder why some writers manage to 'clean up' with multiple awards or at least win one every year? It's because many of them don't take chances by entering just one category but instead increase their odds by entering all or most of the categories!

What difference does this make, entering multiple categories?

Well, consider this:

You enter a category you see as very prestigious and the one you would really want to win. However, everyone else thinks so too and so that category has 150 entries! With only five nominees selected, you have only a 3% chance of making the cut!

Now, if you had entered some of the other categories where you are also very talented, you might have been up against 25 entries, giving you a 20% chance of getting nominated!

At the end of the day a win is a win is a win, regardless of the category! If you don't want to have to wait another whole year to have another chance, you'll increase your chances by entering multiple categories.

"You'll always miss 100% of the shots you don't take."

- Wayne Gretzky

TIP #11 - Key Word Layout 101

Will this really make the difference between whether you win a TORI or not? Not necessarily! But, it's a pet peeve I find many writers are not aware of: how you set up a key word section.

First of all, you really do want a key word section following your unique selling proposition summary. It helps a reviewer rapidly see the skills your client is promising to have proof about further down in the employment section of the resume. Thus, it creates a short-cut to knowing what the job seeker can do in seconds of looking at the resume. It also improves the computer key word scannability of the document.

Your key word section is most reader-friendly when it is in 2-3 columns (vs. a heavy paragraph list). With heavy lists, you might even segment into a few topics like 'management' and 'technology'.

Now, to the key of this topic - layout that can cause problems with your resume and its key words:

1. Using the column function to format a list into 2-3 columns. This is tricky to maintain and most likely your client will mess it up if editing.
2. Using the insert table function to create a 2-3 column table for your key words. This can actually cause key word content to disappear on occasion when the resume is converted to text for a company's resume database.
3. Using text boxes to insert key word columns. (See #2 above).

Yeesh, what does that leave? Inserting hard tabs! Here are the easy instructions from CDI's [Certified Advanced Resume Writer](#) (CARW) Resume Writing guide:

To set tabs, choose **FORMAT>TABS**. Enter the desired tab stop position (use the horizontal ruler as a guide). Choose desired alignment and indicate any leader characters (for a resume, the certification committee suggests the candidate leaves this set to **NONE**). Then click the **SET** button to establish the tab. Once that is done, it is possible to set any other necessary tabs. Once finished, click **OK**.

Then, in each column, you can simply do **INSERT>SYMBOLS** and pick one that resembles the bullets you want to use (round, square, etc.).

TIP: Once you create this for one resume you can cut and paste it onto every one you set up in this format!

"Words do two major things: They provide food for the mind and create light for understanding and awareness."

- Jim Rohn

TIP #12 - Use the Explanation Section to Sell Your Entry

Once you have finished fictionalizing your resume and prepping it for submission, you need to write an explanation about it on the final page of the document.

THIS IS CRITICAL!

This section of the TORI submission is your direct conduit to explain to the judges what you did and why you did it! Did this client have a unique challenge? Was the resume originally in A4 format and you adjusted it for entry? Did you use British spelling because the resume was not used in the US? **DON'T ASSUME!**

Use this opportunity to explain why you did what you did as if you had the opportunity to stand in front of the judging panel and sell them on your strategy!

"The overwhelming majority of theories are rejected because they contain bad explanations, not because they fail experimental tests."

- David Deutsch

TIP #13 - Learn from the Competition

To get where you are going, sometimes it is not about reinventing the wheel. That's why there are great CDI resources to access such as:

- Winning [TORI resumes](#)
- Winning [World's Best Resume Award resumes](#)
- Expert [Articles on Resume Writing](#)
- MonkeySee [Video on Resume Writing](#)
- [Certified Expert Resume Writer Portfolio](#) sample
- Tons of Member Resources when you [login](#)
- [PS...You're a Resume Expert course](#)
- [TORI Master Mentor Training program](#)

Familiarize yourself with what other great resume writers are doing and then take it to the next level - your level with your spin, creativity, and style.

"It takes someone with a vision of the possibilities to attain new levels of experience. Someone with the courage to live his dreams."

- Les Brown

"Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

- St. Francis of Assisi

TIP #14 - Show Up! Last Day to Register, 4 Days to Submit

It's over but it's not over. Today is the final day you can register for the TORIs and receive instructions for fictionalizing and submitting your entries. However, you still have four full days to get your entries in! TIP YOU DON'T NEED THAT MANY!! The deadline for submission is Sunday, June 27th at 12:00 PM Pacific!

DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS ONCE-A-YEAR CAREER- CHANGING OPPORTUNITY.

"Winning starts with beginning."

- Robert H. Shuller

"Live daringly, boldly, fearlessly. Taste the relish to be found in competition - in having put forth the best within you."

- Henry J. Kaiser

"Bite off more than you can chew, then chew it. Plan more than you can do, then do it."

- Anonymous

For more on CDI Awards visit
www.careerdirectors.com/awards.htm

For more on CDI Certifications visit
www.careerdirectors.com/cert.htm