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Position and Elevate Your Resume
ASSOCIATIONS NOW, September 2008

By: *Laura DeCarlo*

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To make your resume succeed in landing you the job of your dreams, you must understand how it will be viewed by employers.

One of the key mistakes you can make is to write your resume solely for the individual for whom you will work. While this person makes the job offer, he or she is rarely the first person to see your resume. Instead, your resume passes through a first layer of individuals and systems that evaluate it and determine if it even reaches the decision maker.

To insulate yourself from errors and ensure your resume survives the initial scan requires that you understand and adjust your resume to these key reviewers:

Clerk scan. The clerk scan is the evaluation that most resumes receive upon submission. This individual frequently gives your resume as little as 10 seconds before deciding whether or not you will be considered. It is critical to make your resume quick to review by front-loading it with a clear, targeted summary of your unique selling propositions and supporting key words that detail your core competencies. This summary funnels the reader into your experience section where you can provide supporting details.

Key word scan. This refers to the ocular character recognition (OCR) scanning of your resume into a database such as Resumix. This is done to better catalog applicant skillsets. To ensure your resume is scannable, include a keyword section and avoid fancy styles in your document. This list follows your summary and should include two to three columns of 12 to 18 key competencies targeted to your objective.

Decision-maker evaluation. This is the end result you were seeking when you initially submitted your resume. Your resume is now in a smaller stack of qualified candidates, so it must stand out visually and clearly qualify and quantify the value you offer. Start each of your most recent employment positions with a short paragraph describing the challenges and/or goals you faced. Follow this with the corresponding position bullets, striving to tell a story of challenge, action, and result in each one.

As you work to describe your career to date, envision a puzzle assembled to maximum advantage, not a linear timeline. Look at each piece and place it precisely so the decision maker can "see" you on paper.

Additionally, watch for common resume killers such as dating yourself with a lengthy timeline, spelling and


grammatical errors, tiny margins and fonts, and lack of unique selling propositions and achievements.

Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression!

[Laura DeCarlo](#) is president of Career Directors International and principal of A Competitive Edge Career Service, LLC, a turnkey resume writing and career coaching firm. She is degreed with nine industry certifications, has three published books, and won numerous awards. For more information, visit www.acompetitiveedge.com.

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