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Update Your Resume: 3 Simple Steps for Success

Whether you are happily cruising along in a job, facing a layoff, or unemployed and seeking employment, it is never too late to update your resume for better job and career opportunities. In fact, September is the 7th annual Update Your Resume Month as proclaimed by [Career Directors International \(CDI\)](#).

To assist you in an endeavor that many consider daunting, here are 3 relatively simple steps:

1. Get rid of the old and irrelevant information.
2. Concisely and compellingly convey the new and relevant.
3. Proofread - and get others you trust to proofread for you as well.

If you apply these 3 steps to each section of your resume, you can "eat the elephant one bite at a time" and emerge with a transformed marketing document that will not only convince an employer you have value and are differentiated from your competition, but also market you as up-to-date in terms of technology and industry standards.

In order to perform steps 1 & 2, you need to determine your focus for this resume: what type of job and what level are you targeting? Generic resumes, listings of everything you have ever done that you keep adding onto year after year, just do not cut it anymore.

Are you looking for an Entry-level Customer Service Rep position or a Financial Information Systems Management position? Give the reader a focus in order to make sense of the content in the resume. The focus is the touchstone for what is relevant information (to include and emphasize), and what is irrelevant (to eliminate or downplay). The content of your resume is the proof that substantiates whether your focus is believable in the employer's eyes or not.

Once you have decided on the focus, you can then turn your attention to what layout is optimal to showcase your resume content. What structure - a reverse chronological layout, functional, or combination style - would more easily and convincingly convey your qualifications and points of differentiation? Remember, too, employers are more partial to reverse chronological and combination style resumes...functional resumes are less in favor.

Here are the 7 basic content areas of a resume:

1. Contact Information
2. Header / Summary
3. Education, Training and Certifications
4. Technology and Language Skills
5. Professional Experience
6. Professional Associations and Memberships
7. Leadership Involvement, Awards and Honors

What do you want to consider to get rid of the old and irrelevant, and emphasize the new and relevant? Here are a few examples using some of the above resume content areas:

1. Contact Information. Do not include your office phone number or 800 number; most employers will not take it kindly that you are using your employer's time to job search and they assume you will do the same with them. Whatever phone number(s) you list, home phone and/or cell phone, be sure the voicemail message is professional. Same goes for your email address - get rid of cutesy addresses or ones that contain your birthdate or year of graduation. If you are posting your resume online, you may want to consider eliminating your street address and phone numbers and only include your name and email address for privacy reasons and to help thwart identity theft.
2. Summary / Header. This introduction to the relevant content (proof) in your resume is critical; it may be the only section of your resume that gets read. Include your focus as the Header and then make your case in the summary for "Why should I hire you?". Go beyond just saying you have excellent communication skills; prove you have them by pointing out your added value, accomplishments, and cutting-edge qualifications, such as certifications, technology, and language skills. Include keywords and keyword phrases that pertain to your focus. Check out current job postings for your targeted job title and look for required and desired keywords, as well as for up-to-date qualifications now required by employers.
3. Professional Associations and Memberships. Omit professional and trade associations that you are no longer currently involved with or that are not relevant to your resume's focus. Be proactive about joining and participating in at least one professional association, preferably a large and well-known one that has state and/or regional chapter meetings you can attend. Again, choose an association in the industry and/or

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career field that is relevant to your focus for the resume. The contacts you make at the meetings will jumpstart your networking for job leads, and the association will likely also have a members-only job board with exclusive job postings and a resume database that employers and recruiters will peruse for candidates.

Finally, proofread your resume carefully and have others proofread it as well for grammar, spelling, and to see if it makes sense. It is amazing what you think is obvious will not be to others. Eight-four percent of executives [polled by Office Team](#) relayed that only **one or two typos are enough to disqualify a candidate** from consideration.

In the process of updating your resume you may find there are additional skills you need to acquire to be competitive in today's job market. For example, just because you obtained a Bachelor's Degree 20 years ago does not mean you are still viewed as a viable candidate. Certifications, coursework and professional development are considered proof of ongoing excellence in knowledge for any career field. Bottomline: employers do not hire old knowledge.

With the above 3 simple steps, you can accomplish updating your resume in an organized manner, one step at a time, by keeping an eye always on your focus. Why not consider updating your resume on a regular basis, more than just annually? That way you will be prepared for good opportunities as they emerge and be ready to act on them immediately (the good job openings rarely stick around for long).

By [Susan Guarneri](#) and courtesy of [CareerHub.com](#). The Career Hub blog connects job seekers with experts in career counseling, resume writing, personal branding and recruiting.

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