



The Finish Line

With diplomas in view, 2007 grads must sharpen resume

This time of year, a typical college senior is just trying to get through the last few days of classes, survive finals and eventually reach that glorious finish line - graduation day. But once the pomp and circumstance of graduation has faded, then what?

Although the thought of searching for your first job can be both frustrating and intimidating, it's a challenge that every new college grad must face.

A good first step is to create a functional resume that effectively showcases your talents, interests and experiences. If done right, you'll have that first job offer in no time.

Follow these tips to help make a seamless transition from college to the working world:

Keep it simple:

If your resume is difficult to read or key information is buried, it likely will stand out for the wrong reasons. Keep the format clean and professional, and make sure all content is clear and concise.

When submitting multiple pages, make sure to use consistent stationary and fonts to present a cohesive look, says Bernadette Kenny of human resources firm Adecco in New York City.

"You can grab the reader's attention by using bullet points and bold font to highlight key skills and job titles," Kenny says.

Steer clear of using bright colored paper or designs, which could demonstrate a lack of professionalism when applying for a business-related job, says Michael Ellis, director of career and life education at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, Pa.

"The business community is still, for the most part, very traditional in what they are looking for in a resume," Ellis says. "My biggest bit of advice is to stay relatively conservative and stick to standard business format, both in the resume and in the cover letter."

Sell it:



**TAKE A
SURVEY**

**RESEARCH
PURPOSES
ONLY**



Most college grads are low on work experience, so it's important to highlight the skills and knowledge you've picked up in your college classes.

Rather than just listing the relevant courses you took, emphasize what you know and how you'd apply it to the job.

"Most new grads make the mistake of listing courses under their degree, but never play up the rich hands-on experience they have gained in each area," says career coach Laura DeCarlo, executive director of Career Directors International in Melbourne, Fla. "It's absolutely necessary to build a section made up of your knowledge, skills and training."

Remember when applying for a job, you're essentially making a sales pitch to the company. Focus your resume on the things that set you apart and make you interesting, but try not to set off alarm bells.

"Successful job candidates go beyond simply providing factual information and use it as an opportunity to demonstrate exactly why they should be hired," Kenny says. "You only get one chance to make a first impression with a potential employer, so make it count."

Go beyond 9 to 5:

Listing experiences outside of work and your college classes — such as extracurricular activities and volunteer work — will demonstrate that you have an active lifestyle and are open to doing a variety of things.

In some cases community service and other activities can be just as important as education and work experience, says career coach Roberta Matuson of Human Resource Solutions in Northampton, Mass.

"Participating in outside programs while maintaining a good grade point average shows employers that you have the ability to multitask, which is critical in today's fast moving world," Matuson says.

Tell the truth:

If you have little work experience, you may be enticed to embellish on your resume, but employers look out for exaggerated skills and will quickly toss out a resume that raises a red flag.

"Tempting as it may be to take this approach, employers really do conduct reference checks," Matuson says. "The truth always comes out in the end."

Falsely inflating your resume could also lead to embarrassment if you're called in for an interview or eventually hired.

Explore the company: If you're interested in a specific company, spending a few minutes researching the business will be time well spent.

You can demonstrate familiarity by tailoring your resume to the company and position, which will show the prospective employer that you're just not sending out a generic resume to several companies.

"While employers want to learn about the candidate, they also want to know that the candidate is interested in them," says Joyce O'Brien, director of human resources at marketing agency Laughlin-Constable in Chicago. "Including a tidbit of information about the company shows them that the candidate has put forth extra effort and done some research."

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