



looks good on paper

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TAHLEQUAH— It's Monday morning, 8 a.m., and Mondays are never good, anyway.

Taped across the computer screen is a note from the boss: "My office, 8:30 a.m."

There have been rumors for months, but that's just typical lunchroom gossip.

"I'll be fine," you think. "I have all the right qualifications."

A co-worker exits the boss's office, his eyes cast down at the floor, pink slip in hand.

"Budget cutbacks – just another downfall of the recent economy, I guess," he mumbles, going over to his desk and boxing up his personal belongings. "Good thing I just updated my resumé."

Being prepared was always his philosophy.

"Resumé? Do I even have a resumé?" you ask yourself.

September is Update Your Resumé Month, and to keep tabs on their recent accomplishments, many people have taken the time to refresh the list of qualifications important to a potential boss.

Career Directors International's Web site offers a list of links containing important information needed when the unemployed or employed begin to seek career advancement.

"What we think of as a 'life print,' or guideline for career development, will provide a proactive approach toward meeting unforeseen market and company changes, in re-evaluating personal worth and in preparing to obtain the next step in career growth," states the site. "Too often, job-seekers avoid taking this crucial step until the last minute, when they need their resumé yesterday. However, by declaring September as the official update month, people will have the opportunity to better control and champion their own futures."

Workforce Oklahoma of Tahlequah offers important services to area residents seeking advice and assistance with creating and updating resumé.

Becky Blevins, Workforce specialist, advises people seeking a job to have resumé prepared ahead of time, allowing forethought and attention to be put on special sections of the paper.

"It is essential to have a resumé," said Blevins. "Most people are very nervous about having a resumé, but the nice thing now is that [Workforce Oklahoma] has a template system."

Job-seekers work on computers provided at the location to fill in necessary information. Blevins, or another worker, then helps the man or woman design the resumé to fit particular details.

"Employees are expecting it to be more customized," said Blevins. "Employers expect that you know how to use a computer. They know you should have access to change fonts, to make things bold, to add lines."

"For those of us who are not smart with computers, coming here is the next best thing," said a woman sitting outside the Workforce office. "They offer a wealth of help and knowledge, and they show you just how important it is to get the details right."

Blevins urges job seekers to inspect every inch of a resumé to proof for the smallest of mistakes. For further security, she advises those who come into Workforce to allow a second set of eyes to read the resumé and proof it, and to look it over again a different day.

"A good employer pays attention to little mistakes," said Blevins. "If you miss a mistake, they assume you aren't paying attention."

Sammye Rusco, director of Communication at Cherokee Nation, immediately pays attention to the style of resumé coming into her office.

"It should be pleasing to look at, but not too fancy," said Rusco. "It should be professional, business-like, and not too long."

Jimmy Browning keeps a basic template saved on his personal computer and styles it to fit a particular application.

"Well, I don't want to use a scripty, formal, elegant font if I'm applying for a 'manly' job," said Browning.

“Obviously, the construction boss isn’t going to choose it over a plain-text resumé.”

Rusco and other employers aren’t looking for over-the-top graphics and colors, but for the information required to hire the correct person.

“They are selling their experience; this is not a design contest,” said Rusco. “List only what pertains to the job being applied for. Recent graduates will also want to list volunteer experience.”

Selecting the proper information to send to a potential employer may be difficult, as some resúmes can be dozens of pages long. To reduce an over-abundance of information, Rusco seeks what she calls the important details.

“We don’t want just a job list on a resumé,” she said. “It’s what they did - particular products they worked on. This helps spark conversation during an interview.”

Must-have information, according to Blevins, includes three personal references and contact information for each; a list of former jobs relating to the new position being applied for; and pertinent duties the potential employee has performed in the past.

“We need to work on resúmes to make them less intimidating,” said Blevins. “The goal is to receive employment, not intimidate readers. A general rule of thumb is to list necessary jobs and duties performed from the year 2000 and on.”

Browning keeps contact information and location saved on a disk.

“If my computer fries, at least I can stick it in a new one and pull it up to print it out if I ever need it,” said Browning.

Caution should be taken when filling in the former job description and duties on resúmes, according to Rusco.

“There are ways to write, words to use, that describe your experience,” said Rusco. “Be truthful; don’t over-exaggerate.”

Certain styles of paper, including marbled resumé paper, cause the readers’ eyes to move and become stressed, according to Blevins. She recommends resúmes be printed on granite paper, which is not as bright as copy paper, and causes less stress on the reader.

“It leaves an excellent impression,” said Blevins. “Resúmes should always be on good, quality paper. Copy paper is as bad as just making a photocopy of the resumé. Nobody has the time they used to have, so it needs to be simple, quick to read and easy comprehend.”

Updating resúmes once a year is a good, general time frame, according to Blevins, who added that employees should never feel 100 percent confident in job security. Many federal occupations are offered through grants, which Blevins said can be taken away at any time.

“You don’t always know,” said Blevins. “Now, an employer can terminate you at will without any problems. Never feel solid in your job.”

Blevins’ general advice to job-seekers is to stay one step ahead of others by continually updating resúmes with new duties or information necessary for future opportunities.

“This is a selling tool,” said Blevins. “You are trying to convince, on paper, this employer to make time to interview you.”

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Photos



Workforce Oklahoma Specialist Becky Blevins (left) assists an area job-seeker with creating an online resumé, part of Workforce’s available assistance programs. Tahlequah Daily Press