

Update Your Resume Month -- 5 Reasons (and Ways) to Update Your Resume Today

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It's hard to believe, but in a few weeks, September rolls around and that means "International Update Your Résumé Month." An initiative spearheaded by Career Directors International (CDI) meant to promote awareness about the importance of having an updated résumé ready.

Why is this so important, you ask?

Fortune favors the prepared mind (Darwin), and this is particularly true when it comes to the job market.

Specifically, here are five reasons why you should update your résumé TODAY:

1 – You can't plan for this scenario and that's exactly the reason you need to be prepared with an updated resume: One day, one of your contacts approaches you with an unbelievable job offer. The position you're being offered is even better than the fantastic one you have right now. Your contact just needs to forward your résumé to his/her boss or to the Board of Directors...NOW. Don't be the sad person going into a frenzy and ending with a sub-par document to submit – barely in time.

2 – Another scenario: Overnight, you find yourself in an industry in distress. Doesn't sound too far off after everything we've been through recently, does it? Who would've thought not too long ago that Wall Street would be in the kind of trouble it is today? It can happen to anyone.

3 – A little less dramatic: Ok – maybe your company is "just" downsizing due to an acquisition, bad financial results, etc. Dealing with the stress of suddenly having to update your resume is not something you want on your plate in addition to everything else that'll be going on.

4 – You are up for your annual performance review and/or want to ask for a raise. I've seen people receive internal job offers for positions with more responsibility after updating their résumés. Finally, it was clear to their bosses what they'd been contributing all along.

5 – It takes time to get prepared. If you go the professional route, keep in mind that most good résumé writers don't churn out résumés overnight. If you're looking for quality service, count on a turnaround time of 2-6 weeks from beginning to final document. If you currently don't have a well-constructed, powerful résumé and you know you should do a complete overhaul, plan ahead - whether doing it yourself or hiring a professional.

Here's how to get prepared -- either for your do-it-yourself résumé project or for your collaboration with a professional.

Five ways to update your resume now:

1 – Evaluate your current career goals and make sure your resume still reflects these. Use a "focus statement" or position title to make it clear who you are and what you do (this replaces the outdated objective statement). If your focus changed since your last update, go through your entire resume and make sure everything is strategic and relevant.

2 - Write all your accomplishments down since your last update. Did you initiate or work on a special project? Did you achieve something special? Surpass goals? Save time or money? Gain clients? Go above and beyond? Did you obtain new skills? Be specific and quantify your results as much as possible.

3 - List conference, training, and seminar attendance. If you finished your education or obtained a certification, make sure to add this, and, if it's relevant to your current career focus, list it close to the beginning of your resume – not at the bottom.

4 - Is your personal information still current or did you move, change your phone number, or get a different email address? Also, make sure this is truly “personal informatio” -- not your employer's contact info!

5 – Include any awards or honors you received.

Sounds like a lot of work? The good news: you're killing a lot of birds with one stone! And from now on, if you chip away at it throughout the year as you obtain new skills or finish a project, it will get done before you know it. When your peers -- and your “competition” -- are losing sleep and scrambling to get their stuff together, you can rest easy knowing you're ready for whatever comes your way. No more missed opportunities: priceless!