

## POSITION, RATE & ELEVATE YOUR RESUME

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To make your resume the most successful that it can be, you have to first understand two things:

- #1 – How most companies review and evaluate resumes.
- #2 – What your resume must do to improve your chances of an interview.

### **Know Your Audience**

One of the key mistakes job seekers at all levels make is in writing their resumes solely for the executive decision maker in their core discipline who will make the final hiring decision. This individual can read between the lines, understand highly technical data, and possibly appreciate the depth of a 4-6 page resume. While this individual holds the final job offer in his or her hands, there is frequently a path your resume must travel before it even reaches this individual. Failing to prepare for the individuals and systems who will evaluate your resume along this path can virtually eliminate your chance of ever reaching the decision maker with your resume.

To insulate yourself from crippling errors and ensure your resume reaches the key decision maker requires that you know and understand the key players to whom your resume may travel, and that you balance your resume to satisfy all their diverse needs.

Note to Executives: At this point do not assume this situation does not apply to you. Your best efforts to position your resume may still result with it being evaluated by a low-level clerk or secretary within the office of a recruiter, company president, or human resource manager. Contingency planning of the kind described in this article can only ensure a win-win result with your resume.

So, who are these audiences or reviewers? There are three key steps, in order, through which your resume will most likely pass:

1. The Clerk Scan.
2. The Key Word / OCR Scan.
3. The Decision Maker Evaluation.

The **Clerk Scan** is the initial “quick” evaluation that most resumes will receive after first being received by a recruiter or company. This individual is frequently a low-level employee who lacks technical and professional knowledge of your experience level, has an overwhelming number of resumes to review, and is able to allocate as little as 10 seconds to each resume evaluation. For this audience, it is critical to make your resume quick to review by front-loading your resume with a clear target, summary of your unique selling proposition, and supporting key words that detail your core competencies. This special section at the start of your resume will funnel the reader into your experience section where you can provide the supporting evidence and details.

The **Key Word / OCR Scan** refers to the ocular character recognition (OCR) scanning of your resume into a database such as Resumix. This is done to save man-hours and better catalog applicant skill sets by recruiters and human resource departments. When the company is seeking a candidate of particular talents, they will feed the computer key words to search for within the database of stored resumes. The more applicable key words that appear in your document, the higher placement you will have on the ensuing list that is generated. To ensure your resume is OCR scannable for both key words and format, you must first not assume the knowledge of your audience regarding the core competencies or process words for your career specialty. Secondly,

you should avoid stylistic choices that may inhibit character recognition such as fonts under 10 point, fancy fonts, underlining, tight line spacing, shading behind text, fiber papers, or text tables.

The **Decision Maker Evaluation** is the end-result you were seeking when you initially submitted your resume. If you survived one or both of the initial two steps, or effectively networked your way here in the first place, you are now in the hands of someone qualified to make a decision. You should expect that you are now in a smaller stack of seemingly equally qualified candidates from who the decision maker must select for interviews. At this point your resume must also stand out visually and clearly qualify and quantify the value you can bring to a prospective employer in terms of challenges, actions, and results. It is important to start strong and stay strong. In each position, avoid bulky paragraphs or laundry lists of responsibilities or results. Your resume should tell a concise and powerful story of the challenges you faced, the steps you took, and the results you attained.

Overall, your vision for your career when consigned to paper should be that of a puzzle assembled to maximum advantage, not a linear timeline. Look at each piece individually, see what it means, and cross the bridge to the decision maker with how you represent the information and accomplishments on paper.

### ***Rate Your Resume***

By now you may have begun to get an idea of how your resume stacks up to the competition. To further evaluate its quality and potential success, ask yourself the following ten yes/no questions:

	Yes	No
1. By scanning your resume for 10 seconds, can you clearly determine an employment goal and the relevant value offered toward that goal?		
2. Does your resume convince you that you are qualified for your job target(s) in the first 1/3 of the first page?		
3. Is the page layout of the resume pleasing to the eye and attractive? Do you want to read it?		
4. Have you used a font and style that are computer scannable in the resume? (Note: most templates are not scannable).		
5. Does the resume have ALL the necessary "key words" to survive a key word scan? Are the key words easily located for visual review in the resume?		
6. When you look at the resume, do you get excited about the value of your qualifications, or does it just look like all the rest?		
7. Does the resume quantify and qualify your achievements, challenges, and results instead of sounding like a laundry list of responsibilities?		
8. Are you aware of what valuable information you may have left out or taken for granted in your resume?		
9. Is there anything that could be construed as negative such as a lack of results, too long or too short positions, or a too-long career track?		
10. Does your resume really sell YOU?		

If you answered “no” to even one question then your resume is not selling you at the level it should. Go back to the drawing board or seek the assistance of a certified professional to guide you through the process of creating a strategic, dynamic, and results-driven resume. Regardless of how you recreate or develop your resume, be certain that it provides a:

- Clear target and direction for a quick review;
- Unique selling proposition and summary of your core expertise;
- Comprehensive key word list (typically 3-columns) of your core position competencies;
- Scannable format for OCR review;
- Formula of challenges, actions, results, and responsibilities in each position to tell a story and cross the bridge to the decision maker with your experience and value;
- Timeline that demonstrates your value but does not date you or over-qualify you as a candidate;
- Dynamic and visually distinctive format that makes a professional first impression;
- Focus on quantifiable results, including numbers, percentages, and dollar amounts whenever possible.

Recognize your resume as, and make it, the single most important first step in your job search and you will not go wrong. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression!

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