

HOW TO BUILD A BETTER RÉSUMÉ

10 Rules Professional Résumé Writers (Almost) Always Follow

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We professional résumé writers at PRWRA are in business to help you compete in an ever more competitive job market. Here is a checklist that most of us follow most of the time (there are always exceptions to every rule) in writing or upgrading résumés for our clients. See if your own résumé falls in line with these suggestions:

1. **Is your format attractive?** Why settle for a mundane format when there are literally thousands of better ones you can emulate? You can find samples of them in books or on the websites of writers like myself. Just remember that overall image and the first impression of prospective employers do count, so take the time to pick an eye-pleasing layout.
2. **Are you using the traditional chronological format?** The chronological format will list your most recent experience first and move backwards toward your first job and education. We know this is the format that most recruiters and hiring managers prefer, which is why I recommend it. Other formats such as the functional, which focuses on three or four major skills sets rather than when you did what, are much less popular or effective.
3. **Did you state your Objective?** Some inexperienced résumé writers believe that their readers will understand what they want to do just by their present job title or past experience. Or they think that they can fill in the blanks in a cover letter. In my opinion, however, it is imperative that the prospective employer knows right up front that you know what you want to do. If you have an additional career objective, then write a second version of your résumé with that in mind.

Too, keep your Objective simple and straightforward; e.g., “Corporate Real Estate Management,” “Facilities Management,” “A continuing career in Construction Management,” or the like.
4. **Did you insert a Summary of Qualifications?** A good summary right after your Objective allows you to give the reader a quick outline of what your background encompasses, affords you an opportunity to emphasize your strengths, and provides a helpful lead-in to what follows. It can be presented in a variety of ways—as a list of bulleted items, as a paragraph, or even with a table containing keywords—but it should never take up more than a third of the page.
5. **Have you been as concise as possible?** A chronic problem for novice résumé writers is length. Not wanting to leave anything out, or intent upon filling up the page(s), novices will add all sorts of unnecessary information. They will splice in lofty adjectives about their persona or performance, describe in excruciating detail how they did this or that, or insert trivia. As a result, they end up using far more space than they need to and yet, paradoxically, say less than they could. Professional résumé writers, on the other hand, always want to be as brief and concise as possible. They know that the more space they save by eliminating superfluous verbiage, the more space is available for showcasing what is really important.
6. **Did you list numerical achievements?** There is no better way to distinguish yourself from your competitors than by listing quantifiable achievements. Such achievements could include the total amount of real estate you sold last year, how many housing units you have managed or constructed, how much money you saved your company by renegotiating vendor contracts, the value of capital projects you managed, etc. And how do you know what is important and what is not? Simply by asking yourself what would impress your next employer the most.
7. **Have you used keywords?** More and more companies and executive recruiters are using scanning software to enter incoming résumés into their databases. Then, when they need to fill a

position, they key in those words that best describe the candidate they are looking for. Thus, it is imperative that you make every effort to include all those words that you think are representative of the position you are after. Never assume that employers will know that you can do this or that: tell them. And if you can't integrate all such words into the text of your résumé, then add them in a separate paragraph entitled "Additional Keywords."

8. **Have you been overly modest?** All too often we overlook what would impress those who evaluate our résumés. We professionals therefore always make it a point to emphasize the breadth of your duties and responsibilities and the number and size of your achievements. Our goal is to present the best possible picture of you consistent with the truth. We do not lie or exaggerate, but rather make sure that the reader knows what it is about you that sets you apart from other candidates, from as simple a thing as a record of perfect attendance to one as complicated as leading multi-million dollar projects.
9. **Have you separated your duties and responsibilities from your achievements?** Surprisingly, a lot of do-it-yourselfers jumble them together. Your résumé will have not only a cleaner appearance, but also far more impact if you take the trouble to list your achievements—usually in bullets prefaced by action verbs—after a brief description of your duties and responsibilities. Remember too to list your achievements in order of importance.
10. **Do your job titles fairly define your function?** Make sure that the job title you were given by your company or organization truly reflects what you do and your level of responsibility. If it does not, then use a job title that more accurately describes what you did in terms others can readily understand and appreciate. A common example of what I mean is for those transitioning from the military to civilian life. (How many civilian companies are looking for a "Tank Commander"?)

Another example, closer to the real estate world, would be that of a Condo Association Property Manager whose résumé I rewrote. Within his family's company, he had been given the title of "Office Manager." While it was true that he managed an office of some 17 employees, his responsibilities were actually much broader. We agreed that "Director of Operations" was more appropriate and competitive for the level job he was after.

Doubtless, my fellow PRWRA associates can add other rules to this checklist, but I believe that if you keep these in mind, your résumé will stand out among your competitors' résumés regardless. Should you have questions, or need help, please feel free to contact others or myself within our Association. We will respond readily to any inquiry.

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