

Your Resume is Outdated

By Karen Bartell

It's a fact. If you have not looked for a job in the last few years, or even if you have, you probably don't know how to do it. So please read on. It could mean the difference between being called in for an interview and being passed over for a more savvy-and better prepared-job candidate.

Times have changed. OK, so I'm stating the obvious, but did you know that nowhere is this more relevant than in today's successful job search strategy?

If you are still thinking that all you have to do is create a pleasant, well-formatted "pretty" resume, put a stamp on the envelope, and mail it out, we have some talking to do. You had better read on.

Three resume formats.

That's right, you heard it. There are not one, but three, essential resume formats to be used in any successful modern-day job search. They are the following:

Presentation Resume

The Presentation format is probably the one you are most used to. This is the "pretty" one I spoke about earlier. It is the standard format traditionally used for mailing, faxing, and presenting directly to an interviewer. However, since we all know these are not the only ways your resume will be greeted these days, you need to become accustomed to the other formats as well.

Keyword Scannable Resume

This format is a relatively new invention brought on the scene to keep up with the changing times. In today's high-tech corporate climate, the bigger companies –and sometimes smaller ones too - will often scan resumes into a database for future retrieval. Here, the resume will need to be stripped of some of its "bells and whistles to make it "scanner friendly." These would include decorative elements such as horizontal or vertical lines, and fancy fonts. A simple non-serif format like Arial or Tahoma works best. It is also essential to make sure none of the letters or other elements touches each other, since this can confuse optical scanning software and create an illegible mess.

This resume format is also optimized with a specific list of keywords, separated by commas or periods. These are most commonly nouns that indicate your experience such as your job title (e.g. Systems Analyst or Account Executive), industry expertise (Microsoft Excel, TCP/IP, C++), or Education (Masters of Business Administration, BS in Engineering). This keyword summary is ideally placed just before the Professional Experience section.

ASCII Resume

ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) resumes are also essential to any modern-day resume campaign, or any time you are emailing your resume to a prospective employer. It also can be used for posting your resume to an online job-bank site such as Monster.com. Like the Keyword Scannable Resume, it should ideally include a Keyword Summary. Unlike the Keyword Scannable, however, it uses a proportional font (generally Courier or Courier New)

Gone are the days when you can simply attach your resume to an email and send it. Unless the employer already knows and trusts you, you are going to have to send it this new way.

This means you are going to basically strip your beautiful resume of all its attractive "bells and whistles."

You will do this as follows:

- 1) First, set your margins to 6.5. Left justify the entire document.
- 2) Next, save your resume in the Plain Text style. This should convert your text to Courier or Courier New font. Ideally the font size should be set to 12 point.
- 3) Next, make sure you remove all bold, italics, underlines, etc. Also convert any tables you may have to text format. You can just separate any text you may have created in the table with commas.
- 4) The next step is to convert any special symbols or characters to keyboard – based features. For instance, convert any bullets you may have created (and, hopefully, you WILL have created these in your resume and cover letter!) to asterisks, since these are found on your computer keyboard and so are ASCII friendly. You may replace each bullet with one or two asterisks, at your discretion.
- 5) After you have finished with this process, you need to simplify your resume even further by saving it in a plain text format. The best is to save it as “MS DOS text with line breaks.” This is found in MS Word under “save as type.”
- 6) Be sure to repeat this process for your cover letter. When cutting and pasting the cover letter to an email document, just place the cover letter before the resume with some kind of separation indication, such as, you guessed it, COVER LETTER. After the cover letter is finished, cut and paste the resume with the indication- you guessed it again- RESUME. Difficult, right? Now just zip it away to the employer of your choice, and you’re done!

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