



CDI BEST PRACTICES TIP SHEET

Resumes for Career Changers

Presenting jobs in a resume for someone who is pursuing a major career change is a challenge that starts much earlier than the first day of writing. This Tip Sheet will review pre-writing activities as well as resume-creation examples.

Before Accepting the Project

Determine that the client is qualified. Compare the job posting(s) with the resume, noting matches in specific college degrees, certifications, training, and experience. For example: "Office management" in the original resume may relate to "employee management" in the target supervisory position; and "account review" in the old resume may relate to "trend analysis" in the target position. For a stay-at-home mom, "managed a household that included five school-aged children and four dogs" is the equivalent of "ability to work in a stressful environment."

Ask the client to describe their experience with the selected core competencies. If enough information exists, proceed with the resume writing project.

If the client appears to lack the required qualifications for the position, let them know that they may not have a chance at the position no matter what sort of magic you perform with the resume. Suggest coaching, training, or spring boarding from an interim position.

During the Client Call

Gaining credibility in the new career field is the paramount strategy for a career changer resume. Many career transitioners do not understand the tremendous importance of proving to employers that they are serious about their new goal. It doesn't occur to them that the employer might not believe they are sincere and committed.

Advise your client to demonstrate commitment to the new field by:

- Joining professional / trade associations of the target field and networking at association meetings and workshops to meet others in the industry.
- Volunteering with the association to integrate into it more quickly and possibly negotiate discounts, the ability to attend meetings at no cost, or other benefits of membership.
- Volunteering within the target field.
- Obtaining training and/or certifications in the new field.
- Reading as much as possible about the target position/field.

Ask the client for three job descriptions for positions of the type they are targeting. From the job descriptions, determine the core competencies required by their target job.

Then, request an in-depth description of your client's experience with the core competencies, using the Challenge-Action-Result (CAR) formula. Elicit all project details, including who supervised and participated on the team; what problems occurred; what tools, software, or methods were used; and what conclusions and results were gained.

Give the client time to recall details of their past life that contain evidence of experience, skills, knowledge, and training that may prove useful on the target job. This means going back as far as high school or junior high to tell about their hobbies, sports, and passions.

- **Example:** If they are applying for a Logistics (Transportation) job and their passion was reading anything and everything about trucks, there is definitely a correlation.

Jane Career Changer Resume Content

Headline and Summary

Leverage your 'best credibility stuff' for this new field. Start the resume with a Professional Profile or Professional Summary. It is important to brand the client; state any prior experience. Add in a degree or certification if they have one.

- **Example:** Office manager adept at transforming dysfunctional groups into cohesive, cooperative teams. Bachelor's degree and 12 years of supervisory experience.

Value Statement

Call out the match between the requirements of the target position and the client's experience in a function-based section of core competencies after the summary. Preferable to a tabbed list of keywords is a bold keyword "headline" followed by a summary or example of the client's experience in this area. Computer Skills or Technology Skills can be included here, as well. Example:

- **University Instruction:** Taught university-level composition courses for seven years beyond graduate school.

Experience

Retain a reverse chronological format for the experience section.

Group jobs related to new objective on the first page of the resume with a category header that will immediately show that the jobs are relevant. Omit short-term, unrelated jobs.

Include only the past 10 to 15 years of experience. If older experience has substantial transferrable skills, place it under a separate Additional Experience section.

Determine and showcase how the client demonstrated those skills in previous positions, including internships. Be sure to include accomplishments / results of using those skills.

- Example: A teacher who wants to move to sales might list these key skills they used in teaching that are also required for sales:
 1. Strong communication skills.
 2. Able to build rapport with a variety of personalities.
 3. Disciplined and able to work independently.
 4. Able to meet goals and deadlines.
 5. Good presentation skills.

The teacher can demonstrate:

1. The ability to leverage learning methodology skills to effectively communicate and build rapport with a variety of individuals.
2. Strong discipline in creating daily, weekly and monthly lesson plans and goals.
3. Ability to work independently.
4. Outstanding presentation and communication skills.

Use language that takes the focus off differences and demonstrates alignment with the new industry. Notice in the example above that “communication skills” became “build rapport.”

Utilize words the employer will recognize by eliminating jargon from the old industry, adopting language that is in the job posting (switching patients to clients, for example), and using language that is neutral.

- **Example of targeted language:** For a salesperson in surgical devices who wishes to switch to high-dollar technology, target by changing, “Met with surgeons to demonstrate new cardiothoracic devices” to “Met with key decision makers (or C-level decision makers) to demonstrate new technology solutions valued at \$20,000 and up.”

Do your homework on industries and job titles, and use wording correctly and honestly.

- **Example of industry-specific language change:** A VP of Marketing wants to move from non-profit associations to a corporation. In this new resume, members become customers or clients.
- **Examples of neutral language:** The resume of a recent operational manager who had spent years working in shipping beer was full of references to kegs and bottles. The more neutral term was “units.” The new resume of a sports writer who wanted to work in corporate writing contained no sports-related topics or sports name dropping, and focused on the tasks that were aligned: writing press releases, newsletters, and marketing copy, developing website copy and increasing web traffic, and other key words in the job posting that matched his experience.

Community and Volunteer Work

Highlight activities that relate to the new target.

If this section contains the majority of the pertinent experience, place it above the Experience section or within the Experience section with Volunteer as part of the title.

Education

Include Certifications or Job-Related Training, if applicable.

Interests and Hobbies

Add this section only if the activities relate to the new target.

Before and After Career Change Resume Examples

- **Before and after examples of Experience section entries for two job seekers:** Some career changes will require you to really do your homework. The following are excerpts from a resume written for an individual by Laura DeCarlo. Both examples demonstrate how the job seeker is positioning prior employment positions to make sense in his career change to project management.

Unless you are already an expert in project management, you will find yourself visiting the Project Management Institute site to learn about their certification and field, and looking at a variety of job descriptions. These research steps are a vital part of a career changer's success so you should capitalize on them as part of your process and charge for the time you take to make your client's resume cross the bridge.

BEFORE:

Kitchen Designer — XYZ BIG BOX 2010 to 2012

Managed kitchen renovation projects from creation to completion, including material acquisition, problem resolution and successful completion of projects. Created innovative kitchen designs. Sold kitchen renovation projects at more than 100% of quota. Provided detailed training to less experienced kitchen designers.

AFTER:

XYZ BIG BOX, Melbourne, FL 2010 to 2012

Project Management – Kitchen Design

Provides strategic, comprehensive leadership and guidance to staff in all aspects of design and build project lifecycles including project scope, initiation, planning, scheduling, budgeting, contractor selection, resource allocation, risk assessment, and quality and cost control. Success attributed to facilitating across-the-board communication regarding project scope, expected deliverables, and major milestones with all involved parties from concept to completion.

- **Project Management:** Directed and oversaw all lifecycle aspects of renovation projects from creation to successful completion. Included requirements gathering, project planning, estimating, budget management, change management, and project sign-off.
 - **Cost Control / Order Management:** Planned work according to objectives by managing material and purchase orders and contracts, verifying accuracy, and ensuring project plans were adhered.
 - **Project Planning / Quality Control:** Ensured project plans were developed to meet compliance guidelines and implemented within realistic scope, schedule, cost, and quality.

- **Requirements Gathering:** Increased kitchen renovation projects by more than 100% above quota through thorough project lifecycle management. Consistently resolved customer issues by understanding customer requirements and delivering solutions to meet their needs.
- **Staff Training:** Achieved No.1 and top ranking for regional design centers around the state by developing and facilitating detailed training sessions to kitchen designers. Willingly shares knowledge, allowing the business to meet objectives while encouraging a knowledge sharing culture.
 - Increased project performance by more than \$3.8M in residential remodeling projects through staff development.

BEFORE:

Mortgage Loan Officer – One Up Finance

2004 to 2010

Originated mortgage loans for residential homeowners and investors. Reviewed and analyzed loan packages for preliminary approval or denial. Assembled documentation for processing and underwriting. Worked closely with underwriters and clients to provide accurate documentation. Created a personal mortgage website. Evaluated and tested website content, layout and design. Successfully analyzed data from web metrics. Created and implemented extremely successful targeted marketing campaigns on major search engines. Search engine placement results included occupying the first 5 positions out of more than 7 million competing sites.

AFTER:

ONE UP FINANCE – Orlando, FL

2004 to 2010

Mortgage Loan Officer (Project Based)

Created key marketing project to develop business and managed the overall success of loan projects for homeowners and investors. Defined projects, analyzed requirements, gathered business requirements, identified risk, delivered quality solutions, and managed the overall schedule to deliver projects on time.

- **Project Lifecycle:** Managed lifecycle for projects from needs analysis and requirements gathering to risk management analysis, documentation, liaising with clients and underwriters, and project closure.
- **Internet Marketing Project:** Achieved top five search engine placement against more than 7 million competing Web sites by creating and managing a personal mortgage Web site to generate incoming leads. Generated significant new business leads.
 - **Planning, Analysis and Testing:** Evaluated and tested Web site content, layout, and design; successfully analyzed data from Web metrics to improve placement.
 - **SEO:** Achieved search engine placement to top five positions by creating and implementing targeted marketing campaigns. Performed independent learning on search engine optimization (SEO) techniques and use of key words.

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Edited by CDI Committee Member Jeri Hird Dutcher