

Why Have a Resume? Self-Marketing Goals

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In many ways a résumé is like a magazine or newspaper advertisement. An ad placed in a crowded magazine or newspaper with similar ads has to attract your attention, be easy to read and comprehend, and be full of benefits to you, the reader. Otherwise, you will pass right over it and not even “see” it. If an ad is any good at all, it will pique your interest, so that you will want to find out more about the product or even order it immediately!

1. Get an Interview!

The primary self-marketing goal of a résumé is to get an interview, which is an “order” for a preview of your product – YOU. Unfortunately, many of the résumés employers and recruiters receive are cookie-cutter versions of the one-page, standard reverse-chronological résumé that tells them very little about the person, and usually more about job duties. Personal branding – that combination of unique strengths, characteristics and experience most relevant to the career goal and target audience – is rarely conveyed on the page.

Think of your résumé like a magazine or newspaper advertisement. In a world where we are all bombarded with information overload, you will probably have 8 to 10 seconds to get your audience’s attention and keep it. The employer or recruiter is your target audience for your “marketing piece” - in this case, your résumé. Create it remembering these guidelines:

- What do you think will grab the attention and interest of this particular employer?
- What industry is the employer in? What market niche? Where do they rank among their competitors (e.g., established Fortune 500 Company or small, but rapidly growing, start-up?) How could you best appeal to THEIR interests?
- What kind of job are you targeting? Is it entry-level? Senior management? In between?
- Do you already have a “warm contact” – like an employee or vendor / supplier at this company – who could hand deliver your résumé and make a strong case for you in person?
- What might the employer be looking for in terms of potential benefits? What are the value drivers for the position being advertised?
- How would your past experience, skills and knowledge be of value?

2. Present Your Strengths and Benefits

Many résumés are simply lists of features, often crammed into a one-page format with small font, narrow margins, and little white space. These features are similar to a list of ingredients on a canned food label (e.g., sugar, water, dextrose, and red dye #2). The typical résumé looks like a job description “list of ingredients”:

I worked
At the following places
For these periods of time
My job titles were this and that
My duties and responsibilities were a little of this and that.

However, the secret behind good résumés is going beyond the features and telling your audience – the “buyer” - directly about the benefits of your product. It’s answering the employer’s questions: “What’s in it for me?” and “Why should I hire you?” It’s going from being a canned food label to a custom gourmet feast.

Demonstrate What You Can Do

Your résumé must clearly show what you can do for the employer by showing what you have done for others – solve problems, innovate new products, increase sales, improve employee motivation, cut costs, streamline procedures, and many more. You will need to do it in a way that the employer can visualize - it must be relevant to the employer's needs and be specific.

Use dollar figures, numbers, percentages, and descriptive results (i.e., \$20 million annual savings achieved by reducing field employee turnover rate 75%). Relevant achievements, with clearly applicable benefits for the employer, will make the “buyer” want to see you even if there is supposedly no immediate opening or a “hiring freeze”. That's because employers always have problems (challenges) to solve and will find ways to create positions for people they believe can deliver those solutions.

4. Link Your Skills and Experience to the Employer's Needs

Go beyond only listing your duties and responsibilities. What did you actually accomplish? What was the difference between your doing the job and someone else who would have been just a “seat-warmer”? In addition, dig deep into the prospective employer's needs. Every industry has problems and concerns (see <http://www.vault.com> for in-depth industry information). Couple that information with what you can find out about a particular employer (here's where the Internet comes in handy, as well as resources in the library and networking for “insider” information). Then customize your résumé to attract your audience – and keep them interested by continuing to communicate results in all the jobs listed on your résumé. Showing a “thread” of employer-desired skills in every job held demonstrates that you will likely exhibit those same skills – and comparable results - in your new job.

Doesn't it make more sense to put some extra effort and time up front to ensure a positive response, rather than putting in time waiting for the phone to ring after sending off 500 “generic” résumés? Often the person to whom you send the résumé will still have to “sell” you as a candidate to their boss. Why not give them the tools to work with – dynamic, benefits-laden information that will do the “selling” for them?

5. Answer the Question: Why Should I Hire You?

Give the employer a good reason (preferably many) to “buy” your product and invite you to an interview. Outperform others with similar qualifications and experience by putting together a personal branding document (otherwise known as a résumé) that demonstrates you are productive (achievements), a continuous learner (nobody buys “old” knowledge), adaptable to change (jobs are now a series of project engagements), and a cooperative team player.

It does take time to develop a good résumé ...but the time you spend will be well invested. Or hire a professional résumé writer to partner with you in producing an interview-generating document with branding appeal. Make it easy for the employer to “picture” you doing the job, and doing it well. Give the employer – your “buyer” - some tantalizing, results-packed “scenarios” of interest and you will find your résumé -to-interview offer ratio will skyrocket! Good luck in your job search—and spin some Resume Magic!