

Resume Tips

I have seen resumes in every way, shape and form. Most resumes that people send me have typos, they're unprofessional or they have misspelled words. They just don't do a good job in representing that person. I'm going to take you through some basic tips on how to write a resume that will stand out.

Resume Tip #1: Resumes should be no longer than two pages

The most critical part of your resume is the first half of the first page because resumes are read in seven seconds. That's it folks – seven seconds. So you want to write your resume so that when people read it they can glance at the most important items that you want them to see in that seven second time-frame.

Resume Tip #2: Most people will only read the first half of the first page

If you have enticed them enough in that first half then they will probably want to read on. So what do you do in that first half of that first page?

Name and Contact Information: First include your name and contact information **including email address**.

Target Opportunity or Industry: If you have targets, list them. What are you targeting? Are you targeting strategic selling? Are you a leader in strategic selling? Put that on there—say that you're a strategic sales person or strategic sales leader for example. Tell the reader what specifically you're looking for. You can alternatively address this in your cover letter.

Key Competencies: Then you want to have what I call key words which are your greatest strengths, your key competencies or key words that you want the reader to glance at first. You can strategically put those words under your contact information centered in maybe two, three or four lines and you can italicize them and space between them. The reader's eye is going to go to those key words first and again, those key words are your greatest strengths.

So if you're a leader, then maybe one of your greatest strengths is leadership. What else are your key strengths? Are you a project manager? Do you do project management? Do you do contract negotiations? Are you good at detail and follow up? Come up with those key skills that you would envision using in that next opportunity and make those key words stand out.

Qualification Summary: You then want to have a short paragraph that summarizes your qualifications. The worst thing you can do with this paragraph is make it like a cookie cutter paragraph. For example, where you say you're a team player or you say those things that everyone else says on their resume. There is no way that your resume is going to stand out if you say exactly the same thing as everybody else.

You really need to think about those things that will grab the reader's attention for that paragraph. The paragraph should reflect who you are and what your particular strengths and focus are. Think about the things that your managers, your peers, and your employees would say about you or the things that really stand out in their minds about you.

Have you developed new programs to increase sales? Have you defused a negative situation? Managed big budgets? Put some of those things in this paragraph. Make it unique and different from everyone else's resume.

Other Key Information: I also like to include in that first half of that first page anything else that you might consider to be key for the reader to know. I helped someone write a resume who wanted to get into a management role. So in that first half of that first page we created a little heading and called it *Leadership Highlights*. It included 3 or 4 bullets of things that this person did to demonstrate their leadership skills.

Now, she never held a leadership role in a paid position. So what?! She held many leadership roles in the community and in different organizations. She's got her advanced degree in marketing. She has an MBA and she held positions where she reported to high level executives such as General Managers and Vice Presidents. So think about those things that build the case for what it is you're trying to sell, so to speak.

Think about other things you want to include in that first half of that first page. For example, if you're somebody that's in tool sales and hardware or DIY expertise is critical for the reader to know you have these skills then you may want to incorporate that information in the first half of the first page rather than having it be lost later on in the resume. So again, think about what you're trying to sell. What you want the reader to know about you and include it there.

Career Highlights: If you're not trying to sell leadership, for example, you might just do a heading and call it career highlights. I love to include career highlights, maybe 3 to 5 bullets of those things that you are most proud of.

Career highlights can mean different things to different people. For example, a marketing executive of a large power tool company. One of her career highlights was that she spent many times as a subject matter expert in various trade media talking about the competitive advantages of their product, holiday season promos, what the consumer confidence index was and those kinds of things. She did a lot of media appearances, so that was a career highlight for her.

I also worked with an emergency management executive and one of his career highlights was that he headed up a large tornado disaster recovery. I've had some sales professional clients who received president's awards and they were in the top ten of their sales force or they brought in a huge deal. For other people it could be a speech that they've given, articles they've written, or degrees they've received. So just think about what those career highlights are for you and put them in that first half of that first page so that information doesn't get lost. Entice the reader to want to continue reading on.

Describe your employer's business, e.g. a diversified paint manufacturer, etc.

Use bullets as they're easier to read and draw the reader's attention to them.

Use numbers to quantify your accomplishments. If you're a road warrior who's not afraid of travel, indicate e.g. that you drove 200km last year covering your territory. If you increased a customer's business by 5% or \$25,000, tell the reader. The eyes are drawn to numbers.

Include a brief paragraph of interests at the end. This isn't mandatory, but I appreciate a chance to get to know what motivates a potential candidate outside of work when I first review their resume. Omit anything to do with religious or political views.