

6 WAYS TO GET RESUMES NOTICED BY EMPLOYERS

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When I help clients write resumes, I tell them to think of themselves as the product and the employer as the buyer. Here are six things I tell my clients they can do with their “sales brochure” to ensure it generates “customer inquiries.”

1. Make it sell. Use a profile paragraph listing your features and benefits instead of an objective. Profile paragraphs list what you offer; objectives list what you want (something the employer usually doesn't care about). Features are aspects of you; benefits are how your features will help the employer. Imagine you were trying to sell a copier. You'd tell the buyer how fast it copies, whether it prints in color, whether it can collate and staple and print in color, right? Those are its features. The benefit of it printing in color is that the buyer doesn't have to take the color work to the local copy shop — saving him or her both time and money. Get it? Remember the copier.

2. Make it relevant. There's a certain amount of matchmaking in hiring. Think of a job ad as a singles ad: “Employer seeks...” Make sure every part of your resume addresses the employer's needs and if it doesn't, cut it! Don't count on the employer to figure out how to connect the dots — spell it out for them. This is especially true if you're a career changer. It may mean that you have to “murder your darlings” (a writer's way of saying cut your favorite parts if they can't justify themselves). You don't have to put in *all* your experience. And it's okay to include background and skills you've gained from a job without listing the job itself. If it means you have a tight, meaty one-page resume instead a fluffy two-pager, that's fine.

3. Make it organized. Parse the information for the reader. Break it up. Use tables and columns. Keep asking yourself: Does it make sense? Does it hang together? Have someone else read it, both people in and outside your field. If it confuses or bores anybody, rewrite it. Your resume should tell a story — the story of your career. Don't be afraid to use lines to separate information, or capitals and bold for heads. Read it for grammar. Consistency in tense, parallelism, sentence structure — these all matter when it comes to creating prose that flows instead of stands in the way of meaning.

4. Make it appealing. Design and content go hand in hand. As you're thinking about how to arrange the information so it's understandable, give thought to how it's laid out. Think about the industry you're in, what types of documents they read, how they like to get meaning. A resume written for a law firm will be different from a resume written for the creative department of an advertising agency. Make it appeal to your customer. (Remember the copier.) Stuck for ideas? This is where it can be inspiring to look at a few books. The *Expert Resumes* series has volumes specifically for the fields of education, computer technology, manufacturing and healthcare, to name a few.

5. Make it believable. Your resume has to be full of examples of accomplishments or there is nothing for the employer to hang onto. They want to hear about the value you've brought to previous employers; they want to read the results and outcomes. Did you save money, increase market share, raise awareness? All jobs have goals; quantify your efforts toward those goals. Ask yourself, how was the organization better because you were there? How did you change things, improve things? It's one thing to say how great you are; it's another thing for someone else to say it. Include quotes from bosses, coworkers or peers in your field who know your work. List their name, title and company. Make sure they're saying relevant things, too, not just that you were nice to work with.

6. Make it memorable. Your resume is going to go into a pile or a database (so you might want to send two versions.) Give it *something* to be remembered by: a graphic that suggests your field, a bit of color, your name going sideways up the page, your initials in the corner, two columns, boxed text (quote, overview, tech tools), an interesting font for the heads. What you can get away with is determined by your industry and by human perception. Yes, silver ink on a purple paper will be memorable, but not in a good way.

Last word... Remember that the best resume in the world is not going to help you if you don't conduct an effective job hunt. The most important part of getting a job is the people-to-people connection. Get to know someone “on the inside.”