Résumé Pointers

See also *Job Application Letter* and *Use LinkedIn to Start your Local Professional Network*

1. What is a résumé?

    a. Your sales brochure
        i. It is about the **needs of the employer –** it's not about **you**.
        ii. It is focused. It addresses the requirements of **a specific job**.
          You can have several résumés – but each one must be focused on the needs of a specific employer/group of employers.[1]
    b. A tool to help you get a face-to-face meeting with a hiring manager.
        i. Use your résumé to get meetings or interviews.
          *The best approach is probably to use it as a **networking tool** See Systematic Networking for Job Search.*

2. What does your résumé need to do?

    a. Demonstrate to a potential employer that you can solve the kind of problem that he or she needs addressed. This assumes that you know what the employer needs as you write your résumé
        1. Through **networking**
        2. Through reading job advertisements.
          There are two problems with responding to job advertisements
            a. *they are posted as a last resort, when an employer has not been able to fill a position through networking*
            b. *a job ad will get perhaps hundreds of responses – making it difficult for an employer to sort the wheat from the chaff.*
    b. Make it easy for an employer to find you.
        i. Through networking contacts – the employer will first ask his or her contacts, "Do you know someone who can do this job?"
        ii. Through database search[2]: By ensuring that you systematically address the job duties and the qualifications you have learned about through networking or by reading a job advertisement. *"Systematically" means using the **identical terminology** to the employer's requirements **in the same priority order** as the*

---

[1] Do not make the mistake of saying "I can do anything" or "I can do 35 things." Of course you can, but an employer wants to know that you can do the job that needs doing, and it will have very specific requirements.

[2] Or through your résumé being read by the most wooden-headed Human Resources Clerk.

> *employer has set them out. This addresses the key words problem.[3]*

3. What are the parts of a résumé?

    a. Contact information

        i. Name

        ii. Mailing Address *Although you may want to leave this out.*

        iii. Phone number

        iv. Email address *If you have an email that doesn't sound adult – like, say,* cookie.sunrise@yahoo.com *– get another one.* Your.name@someprovider.com *is very good.*

    b. **Profile[4]**. This usually includes

        i. A short paragraph that says **what you are** and **what your key experience or abilities** are. *This is written with one eye on the employer's requirements that you have researched.[5]*

            1. Be sure to include the **scope** of your achievements: how big was the budget, how many people did you supervise, what were the implications of failure.[6]

        ii. Key qualifications. *This uses the employer's terminology and puts the qualifications in the same priority order as the employer would put them.[7]*

            1. ***Do not*** *put in nostrums such as "Excellent problem-solver and team worker" If the employer requires problem-solving skills, tell him or her how much experience you have in a problem-solving or teamwork environment.*

---

[3] Copy the keywords from an advertisement or job description if you have one. These will be the words that are searched if your résumé is put into a database, as it most likely will be, if you are responding to an ad. Remember that 94% of résumés do not do this kind of tailoring.

[4] **Do not include an OBJECTIVE**. An objective focuses on your needs (this is the job I want), rather than on the employer's needs (this is the job I can do for you).

[5] So, if the employer is looking for a project manager, your profile says you are a project manager. If it says a team leader for a software project, you are a team leader for a software project. In short, you're the very thing they're looking for.

[6] For example: **Most recently I was hired to manage a $2 million switch project. I developed an automated testing procedure, taught the other employees how to use it, brought the project in on time and on budget and handed it off to the American parent company.**

[7] An effective technique is to create a two-column table (but without any borders) that lists the employer's requirements in column 1 (copied from the job description or advertisement)and how you meet them in column 2. This is called a job self-assessment. Something like this:

Degree in mathematics or computing science from a recognized university	M.A. computing science, Carleton, 2004 B.A. mathematics, Ottawa U, 2002.
5 years experience in software architecture	15 years experience in software projects, 6 years leading software development teams
Knowledge of VMware	4 years of experience with VMware working for Intel

etc.

          iii. **Be concrete**. Give specific examples – people find concrete examples easy to understand. It is important that the potential employer understand the kind of problem you can solve.

          iv. Be sure to indicate

              1. that you are a **Canadian Citizen** or **Landed Immigrant**

              2. that you have a **Security Clearance** (and level)

c. Work Experience

    i. Chronological – most recent first

    ii. Either

        1. name your jobs and employers and dates and ensure that the employer can understand what the job involved (1 sentence) **or**

        2. Name the projects and dates, identify the person for whom you did the project. Describe the scope, challenges and success of the project.

    iii. This needs to be a complete record – no gaps.[8]

d. Education[9]

    i. Degrees and Diplomas, Issuing Institution, Dates Received[10]

    ii. Other Education: professional development courses, etc. *Use this to make clear that you have kept up-to-date in your profession*

    iii. Theses and journal articles. *List these separately. If you are not looking for an academic job, you may want to list these on a separate page, to be presented during a meeting or interview.*

e. Technical Skills unless this has already been addressed in your profile.

    i. Identify your specific technical skills:

        1. Software or hardware you can use

        2. Indicate your proficiency (Basic, Competent, Mastery)

        3. Indicate number of years you have used the product.

f. Languages unless you have already addressed this in your profile.

    i. Identify languages

    ii. Identify read/write/speak

    iii. Identify level (beginner, advanced, fluent)

g. Interests/Involvements outside of work

    i. Identify your outside interests[11]

    ii. Be concrete: Tell people specifically what kind of book you like to read, the sport you coach and the level, the volunteer organizations to which you belong.

h. References

---

[8] Normally a résumé that is not organized chronologically (say, a functional résumé) suggests to the employer that you have something to hide: embarrassing gaps in your work history, former employers who will not give you a good reference, *etc.*

[9] Unless you are looking for an academic job, experience comes before education. If you are looking for an academic job, there should be **no profile** and **education comes before experience.**

[10] If your degrees are not familiar to Canadian readers, translate them. For example: **License** (BA), **Maîtrise** (MA), etc.

[11] People hire people they like. It may be that your outside interests create an opportunity to have a personal conversation with the hiring manager.

i. In the résumés you send out, always say "Available on request"
ii. Carry a page with you on which you list your references, so that it is ready if you are asked.

Be sure to contact each of your referees ahead of time, asking them for permission to use his or her name, and telling them what specific job you are applying for, so they can structure their reference appropriately.

Copyright © Rudi Aksim 2010   Box 86 Carp ON Canada K0A 1L0   http://www.aksim.org
Skype: **rudi.aksim**   rudi@aksim.org