

## Resumes that Get You the Interview

By Colleen Clarke

Being in possession of a truly professional resume—one that defines who you are, your magic, and your accomplishments—is mandatory for every job seekers' toolkit. Your ability to describe your "professional wonderment" in a clear, concise manner will open interview doors that keep the average applicant out.

Formatting is also important and it is absolutely mandatory that spelling, grammar and punctuation be perfect. No mistakes.

### Styles of Resumes

There are three styles of resumes: chronological, functional and combination. The most common is chronological, though if you are changing careers, you will want to use the functional. Recruiters only work with chronological or combination resumes as a rule; they think you are hiding something if you use a functional. Samples of both are available on my website at [www.colleenclarke.com](http://www.colleenclarke.com).

### Basic Resume Rules

- Resumes are written for the reader. You write a tad differently for an HR person than for a hiring manager. Find out who is going to receive and read your resume.
- Tailor each resume to suit the job requirements. Move bullet points around within a position to highlight the particular strengths that match the position's requirements.
- Be able to quantify your accomplishments with an Action and a Result statement where applicable.
- Provide accomplishment statements for jobs that go back 15 years or fewer. If you would like to mention jobs older than that, just list the company and job title, no accomplishments—unless it was a totally brilliant success.
- Be truthful about length of employment, titles and accomplishments.
- Don't assume people know what you mean; don't make them guess how wonderful you are.
- Keep your language simple. Your resume is not the place to show off your MBA writing capabilities.
- Be sure to include key words from the job description.
- Start every sentence with a past tense action verb unless you are still doing the work, in which case present tense is required. It is ok to mix tenses from one point to another when describing your present position.
- Keep explanations to a minimum. Focus on the actions you undertook and the results.
- Process-driven tasks or projects may not have a result until the end of the project. In this case, there will be several points of Action and a final Result. Be careful not to get bogged down in the specifics of the project. Stick to your role in the task.
- Cut out extraneous words. You don't need to say *successfully* completed—*successfully* is redundant.
- Don't use parenthesis. Use commas or dashes when displaying acronyms or writing out a name in full.
- It's your decision to put your graduation years in if you are an experienced worker.
- Don't spend a lot of time on cover letters and don't regurgitate your resume in your letter.
- No more than three pages max.
- Send resumes by email and include your cover letter in the same file.
- Post your resume on all the job boards you can find.

If you have been applying to internal or external positions and you are not getting interviews, chances are your resume needs some polishing or tightening up.

## **The Profile**

I believe the Profile or Highlights of Qualifications is the most prominent and revealing section of the resume; it is also the hardest to write. There is a formula that you can follow to make writing it much easier.

The Profile can be written in a paragraph or bulleted style—your choice.

- The first point is the number of years you have been in your profession and the number of years you have been doing the work in the objective, the position you are applying to.
- The next two points are specific examples of your expertise, the industries you have worked in, if relevant, or a specific outstanding or noteworthy accomplishment that might stand out from other incumbents. For example, one of my clients was a CBC producer and his point was “produced and directed the telecast of the Pope’s visit to Canada for the CBC in XXXX.”
- The next one or two points can be more wonderment or your strengths. Strengths differ from skills in that they describe who you are and how you apply your skills. They are the “I AM” or “I HAVE” Phrases. Don’t make a grocery list of soft skills; three or four will do. If you have excellent communication or interpersonal skills, tell me what they are; don’t just say you have them. Examples might be “a strategizer with vision and perseverance to take projects from creation through to completion” OR “highly focused, detailed and accurate in all undertakings.”
- The last point is miscellaneous information like languages spoken, global experience, awards received or current or recently completed education.

## **Finally**

Keep your resume up to date. Trying to remember your wonderment from 10 years ago is difficult and usually not very accurate.

A resume is a work in progress. No matter how many times you revise it, someone will have advice on how to tweak it yet another way. Your resume is your marketing tool, so make sure it is professionally written and truly sells you.

## **Cover Letters**

The biggest mistake job seekers make is regurgitating their resume in their cover letter. The cover letter is an opportunity for you to tell the reader what you are going to do for them based on these specific skills you have.

Begin with a power opening and end with a power close, in other words, something catchy and not cliché and boring like “Please find attached my resume in application for xyz position.” Get creative—but not cutesy.

- Direct your letter to the person in the organization with the authority to hire you.
- If the name is not indicated, call and get the correct spelling and gender identification: Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss.
- If no name is available, write “Dear Sir/Madam.”
- Put your name, address, email and phone number at the top of the page.
- Get to the point of why you are writing immediately.
- Match each requirement asked for with your appropriate qualification.
- Identify a problem you can solve for the organization.

- Focus on your strengths.
- Include a piece of non-standard information about the company. This makes the letter more personal and demonstrates more than just a casual or passing interest in the company.
- Keep your sentences to 20-25 words and paragraphs to five lines.
- Write in a conversational tone—informal but businesslike.
- Keep to only one page. Do not rehash your resume.
- Use excellent grammar, spelling and punctuation. No typos are allowed
- Never tell your salary requirements; indicate you are “open” or “negotiable.”
- Letters to recruiters are one or two lines and confirm your phone conversation. You can mention salary expectations and whether you are willing to relocate.
- In a networking campaign, send 10-15 letters with resumes, maximum, per week. The closing line should say when you will call back to set up a *meeting*, not an interview.
- Thank you letters should be mailed, not emailed, within 36 hours of a meeting or interview. They can be handwritten on a tasteful thank-you card or a typed letter. Be brief.
- Don't spend too much time on your letters as many are not read, especially by recruiters.
- Remember to sign or add your name.

As with your resume, ask someone with a good command of the English language to proof your letter not only for mistakes but also for flow, verbiage and content.

Your toolbox is now getting full. Check to see what other tools you need to conduct a well-thought-out professional job search. It might be time now to start building your resource base to start networking.

*Colleen is a career coach who has assisted over 7000 people through career transition and career management. Check out her website at [www.colleenclarke.com](http://www.colleenclarke.com) for resume samples.*

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