



10 Tips to Get your Resume to the Top of the Pile

Start with the "Power Sell".

A page that lists one accomplishment after another certainly is powerful. But even more compelling is the big picture: a quick summary of why, with all your accomplishments, experience and personal attributes, you are the best candidate for the job. The "power sell" is a brief but powerful statement (no more than a short paragraph) that sums up your career and demonstrates that your skills and experience fit the employer's needs. It's what gets their attention and keeps them reading.

When creating the "power sell," consider your prospective employer's needs. What will be your greatest draw? For example, is the employer looking for internet experience? Someone who can sell? A strategic thinker? Put together a summary that emphasizes the skills you have that meet the employer's requirements.

Follow it Up with Proof.

Now that you've described yourself as an all-star, provide the proof to back it up. This is the meat of your resume, a listing of all the positions you've held, and your accomplishments within them. The most important point to remember in this section is to focus on performance, not responsibilities. Demonstrate actual accomplishments. And provide real numbers when possible to back up your statements. For example, don't just say you managed a significant budget, tell your prospective employer you controlled a marketing budget of over \$7.8 million. Did you save money? Well, by all means, tell them how much! Did you increase sales? By what percentage? Did you plan an event involving major entertainers? Name them! You get the picture. Now make sure your prospective boss does too.

Have an Objective But Don't State It.

Knowing exactly what you want is a great thing. But don't include your

objective in your resume. It's unnecessary and may actually pigeonhole you out of an interview.

Use Action Words.

Want to get a sure yawn? Start out each job description with the words: "Responsibilities included." Nothing is more ordinary and dull. Instead, use active verbs to describe your accomplishments. Examples of action verbs: generated, controlled, organized, strengthened, facilitated, directed, maximized, led, negotiated, devised, pioneered, streamlined, launched, created, built, developed. Get the idea?

Keep it Short and Simple.

It's very easy to fall into the "fancy language" trap. You find yourself using long words and phrases to describe something simple because you think it sounds more impressive or businesslike. Forget it. Give yourself a break and say what you mean - as concisely as possible.

Include Added "Extras" that Set You Apart.

Most employers - the good ones, anyway - don't want to just hire a walking skillset. They are looking to hire a full person. After you've finished listing your job experience, include those things you do that make you proud and differentiate you from the crowd. For example: awards you've won, professional memberships, special talents, languages spoken, unique computer skills, volunteer work.

Shoot for Substance Over Flash.

It used to be that the longest part of the resume creation process was the formatting, making it visually attractive and ready for print. Now in the age of e-mail, how it looks is thankfully less important than what it says. Certainly, your resume should be professional and neat looking, the fonts should be readable and not too small and not too stylized. And by all means, NO TYPOS. But concentrate more on the content than the type of paper you use, if you even use paper at all.

Don't Mention Salary.

The resume simply is not the time or place to talk money. Let your recruiter be the mediator in the salary conversations. If you are dealing directly with the employer, save this conversation until the employer brings it up.

Edit, Edit, Edit. And then Edit Some More.

There is no such thing as a top-notch resume that is completed in one sitting. Go over your resume time and time again. The first sitting should be a brain dump, a stream of consciousness exercise, essentially. Then rewrite it in a more structured, compelling way. Go over it to add anything you may have overlooked the first time around. Then reread it to improve the language. Check it again to shorten sentences where possible. Check it again for spelling. Shorten some more. Improve where possible. Check spelling again. When you feel it is as strong as it can be, have a trusted friend review it one more time and then your resume is ready. That is, after you check it one more time.

Customize When you Can

In these days of home computers and printers, it's virtually effortless to make changes to your resume. So why not tweak it for each position you are seriously interested in? Is your prospective employer seeking writing skills above all else? Then emphasize your writing experience throughout the page. Or is it more promotions experience she needs? A few quick edits, and you can stress your promotions background. Think of your prospective employer as your customer-what will be the strongest selling points of your product (you) to the customer? Remember: no two customers are exactly the same.

The Interview - An Insider's Perspective

Your resume worked--you got the interview. Now what?

We move on to the all important interview, the face-to-face meeting that will either make you or break you. The key to success: preparation. Even the most confident, well-spoken job seekers need to do their homework. Here is advice to help you along the way.

#1 Do your research.

The key to being well-prepared is research. Find out everything you can about the company and the position beforehand. The best research tool you can use is right in front of you: the web. Go to the company's web site. Read its annual report and press releases. Find out about its products, services, history, growth and future goals. Do a search on the internet for recent articles. Ask your contact, whether your recruiter or the employer's representative, key questions about the position you are going for. Learning everything you can ahead of time will help you be confident and informed during the interview. And it may help you determine just how badly you want the job.

#2 Arrive early and bring essentials.

Give yourself plenty of extra time to get to the interview. Arrive just a little bit early, but not so early that you interfere with the interviewer's schedule. This will help keep you relaxed as well as demonstrate to your prospective employer that you are prompt and responsible. Make sure you have the correct address, including floor or suite number, and clear directions on how to get there. Other essentials to bring: resume, pad and pen, names of people you are meeting with.

#3 Relax and think positive.

Nearly everyone is a little nervous during an interview. That's natural. Just don't let your nerves overwhelm you. Take some deep breaths and quiet those words of self-doubt and negativism. Instead, visualize a successful interview before you even walk in the door. Remind yourself of your accomplishments and skills. You want to project an image of confidence and professionalism. Again, preparation will help.

#4 Have a goal in mind.

In your preparation for the interview, write down the most important points about yourself you want to get across. What skills do you have that will be most important to the employer? What are your top accomplishments? Did you help to increase sales, reduce costs, or solve a problem? Be specific. The goal is to convey these points before you leave. Ultimately, before you go, the employer should know the answer to the all-important question: "Why should we hire you?"

#5 Talk about what the company needs, not what you want.

In reply to the interviewer's questions, put your answers into context of what the company is looking for. Don't ramble on about everything you are seeking in a job. The employer is not interested in meeting your needs, but his or her own. Be careful in particular when it comes to the "tell-me-about-yourself" question. Keep your answer fairly brief, but get across those key skills and accomplishments that will be seen as an asset to your prospective employer. Read the job description carefully before you go in. This can help shape your answers so that you can show how your strengths fit well with the employer's requirements.

#6 Remember: You are evaluating them as well.

Although your primary goal is to accurately and positively discuss your experience and skills, the interview is not a one-way exercise. You can learn a great deal about the employer and the desirability of the position during your discussions.

#7 Above all, ask questions.

Chances are you'll get to the point in the interview when you are asked: "Do YOU have any questions?" By all means, take advantage of this moment. Ask more about the position, the company, your potential boss' management style, where he or she is in the interview process. Asking questions not only gets you the information you need to make a good decision, but shows you are interested, assertive and intelligent.

#8 Be ready for the tough questions.

Don't let a difficult question throw you. For example:

- Why are you leaving your current job?
- What are your greatest weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?
- How do you measure success?
- What are you looking for in terms of salary?
- Are you a doer or a delegator?

Be honest and as positive as possible. Keep in mind the goal of the interview and the points you want to get across, and try to steer each question towards that goal. For example, turn your "weakness" into a strength: you may sometimes be impatient, but that is because you are goal-oriented and strive to get the job done quickly. Get the idea? Avoid salary questions. But if that's impossible, never give a flat number. Ask what the range is for the position, and then provide the range you are seeking.

#9 Never speak negatively about former employers.

Talk about your previous positions and bosses in the most positive light possible. Keep in the mind the experience and insights you have gained and the opportunities you have been given. If you are highly critical about past work experiences, you may be seen in a negative light yourself.

#10 Send a thank you note promptly.

A little thank you goes a long way. Immediately send a note after the interview and e-mail is an increasingly popular way to do so. Be sincere and courteous. Re-emphasize your top two or three skills that make you an ideal candidate for the position. This can also be your chance to get across something you may have forgotten to mention, clear up any misconceptions, or allay any fears the employer may have about you. Finally, make it clear that you are interested and excited about the job and would welcome the opportunity to work for the employer.