

Staffback

hiring made simple



Resume Tips for 2009

By Ken Winters, Founder of Staffback

I've been in the workforce for just over 20 years and have not seen the type of job loss and economic downward spiral we have experienced. We have easily surpassed the recession of the early 90s without any optimistic news on the horizon. In an effort to support those looking for work, the following guide is provided to support and encourage as you update your resume and search for jobs.

Human Resource professionals have been adapting to the process shift in which resume submission has converted from 100% paper to 100% e-mail over the past 15 years. This shift drives most of the tips provided so it's important to understand the shift. In summary, resumes are so easily submitted via e-mail that HR professionals are having a difficult time managing the overwhelming number of resumes, many of which are unqualified candidates submitting resumes for any job, and it's understandable why since submitting resumes via e-mail is virtually free.

HR professionals have turned to technology to counter the avalanche of resumes for review. The technology deployed to counter the management of resumes is called an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) and basically these systems convert resumes into a searchable database of information. Think of it as if the ATS creates a mini internet of resume pages and HR then uses their ATS to search for a particular webpage (resume), and you want them to find and view yours... here's how:

1. **Keywords:** in a document separate from your resume, list everything you've done, every software program you've worked with, every company you've worked with, every phone system, every professional association, every vendor and every acronym. Save your keyword list as a separate file from your resume and maintain/update it like your resume from this point forward.
2. **Keyword deviation:** Go through your keyword list and add every deviation of the keywords you've captured. The Mac operating system "OS X" should also be listed as "OSX," "Home Depot" should also be listed as "HomeDepot." "Microsoft" is also "MS." If you can't see the deviations get a friend with your similar work history to help you.
3. Add a "Keywords" section to your resume and include your list created above. Exact terms already included in your resume do not need to be repeated in the keyword section. Etiquette is not established for this new resume section but I believe it is ok to add this new section right after Experience/before Education. I also believe it is OK to subordinate this section with font that is a bit smaller than the other text in your resume.

4. Minimize unusual fonts and characters in your resume, especially around your name and contact information. This is due to the fact that an ATS converts your resume and unusual characters/formatting can cause your resume to convert incorrectly or not at all.

There are a variety of studies out that report HR professional spend 3 minutes (or less) reviewing each resume. As a result you have to place facts and tell a consistent story that creates an emotional hook for the resume reviewer to decide to invest more of their limited time reviewing your resume. Here's how:

5. Objectify most of your resume. In other words, review every piece of information communicated in your resume and add facts when possible appropriate. For example, "Exceeded annual sales goal" is much weaker than "Exceeded the \$700,000 annual sales goal by \$53,000." Or, "Completed the project ahead of schedule and below budget" is much weaker than "Completed the 8 month project 3 weeks ahead of schedule and \$14,000 below the \$172,000 budget."
6. Make sure you use a professional e-mail address in your resume and use it to submit resumes, because "partygirl21@email.com" isn't a good first impression.
7. Add a "brag line" (for lack of a better term) immediately under each employer's name you've worked for. The bragging isn't about you, it's about your current or prior employer. So in one or two sentences, summarize what the company does and brag about an accomplishment they achieved or something they are noted for. Many times this can be found on the company website, for example: "Intel is the worldwide leader in the development and production of microprocessors with 2008 worldwide revenue reaching \$37.6 billion." Or "Sam's Sandwich Shop makes quality and affordable sandwiches. Family owned for 16 years, Sam's was awarded the 2008 Food Service Business of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce." A brag line is typically in italics to help separate the context from the business and your individual responsibilities.
8. Name your resume appropriately. Failure to do so creates the impression that you are oblivious to the recipient of your resume and the context they will be reviewing it in. This begs the question as to what your correspondence would look like if you were to be hired. Firstname Lastname.doc works well; resume.doc or myresume.doc just isn't a good first impression.
9. Set your Objective to be outward focusing on service, customers, growth and/or company success. Any reference to self serving goals would be better left off as it doesn't add value to your resume. If you are serious about a particular job, always modify your objective to reflect the precise position/opportunity you are applying for. Sending an "Accounting Manager" objective to a "Loan Officer" opportunity creates a bad first impression.
10. Save iterations of your resume for future reference by just adding the date it was archived in the document name, keeping your Firstname Lastname.doc named resume for publishing externally.
11. Explain in a work or professional context moves and job changes. Any short term job that can be explained should such as "temporary full-time summer job" "3 month contract" "temporary assignment through Temp Agency X" help provide context that can change the perception from being a "job hopper" to a diligent and resourceful employee.

12. If you have earned a credential that entitles you to use a logo on your resume, add it. One of the most common examples is Microsoft certification.
 13. If you are applying to jobs out of your area, include a relocation note in your cover letter and/or resume. Explain what your relocation expenses would need to be, or better yet, if you are willing to relocate at your own expense. Include a bit of information about why your relocation will be stable, such as, "I have friends and family in the area" or "I attended college in the area" or "I am moving to your area for family reasons as soon as I secure a job."
 14. Send your resume to a friend with similar work experiences to get his/her opinion. Ask them to list five things they'd change about your resume.
 15. Training and education is typically the last section of a resume. It is an opportunity for you to tie your story together and motivate the reviewer to take another longer look. To do this, you must list your education and training chronologically with a brief description, dates (and location if you've lived in different areas of the country). Basically listing them just as you listed your work experience. It's a very important last impression to demonstrate professional development and ambition which provides a context for a reviewer to project your performance in the open position. A complete education and training section also adds credibility to your resume, for example if you listed your years and location working in college above in experience and then listed your college education years and location below in education and training it provides a type of verification.
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The current recession is likely the worst we will face in our working years and I encourage you to move forward with a sense of urgency and consider applying for part-time work (if you haven't already) as a bit of income and the networking opportunities could be what you need to make it through.

Update January 29, 2009

This whitepaper was used as a source for an article published at the following link:
http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/business/ci_11569682

Update April 16, 2009

This whitepaper was used as a source for a second article published at the following link:
http://www.collegerecruiter.com/employersblog/2009/04/a_scientific_approach_to_resum.php

About Staffback

In summary, Staffback performs all HR work in the hiring process for a flat hourly rate.

To say it another way, Staffback provides a way for employers to outsource everything in the hiring process, with the exception of the Hiring Manager's interviewing and selection. The service is a hybrid between an internal HR department and a Recruiter, but the service is billed at a flat hourly rate of \$80/hour resulting in a significant cost savings when compared to recruiter commission based services or other RPOs. \$80/hour x the hours worked roughly works out to about 2% of total compensation (or less). Staffback's target market is companies hiring 1 to 150 positions at any given time. Our clients typically don't have HR, or need support for their existing HR staff (and hiring managers). Staffback provides a way for your company to be compliant in the hiring process, scale hiring/recruiting capacity as needed and benefit from the latest technology which helps reduce time to hire and a variety of future problems.

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