

*Adapted from Cal Alumni Association <http://alumni.berkeley.edu>

Resumes Do's and Don't

Peter Newfield President of Career Resumes

You know that a resume is the first step in searching for that fabulous new job, but how can you make sure that the resume you send out is not going to get tossed into the blue recycling bin?

Many hardworking, educated professionals send out pathetic, slapped-together resumes that aren't worth the time they took to press the "send" button or lick the stamp. There are certain components of a strong, focused resume that should not be overlooked. Here's a little review of the most common Resume Do's and Don'ts:

DO CHOOSE THE RIGHT FORMAT

If you have been in the same industry for your entire career, a modified-functional resume format might work best. The modified functional resume emphasizes the companies, titles, responsibilities, and achievements you have had starting from the current employer. If you have worked in various fields or have held numerous positions at many diverse companies, then you should select a functional resume format which will highlight your skills and achievements rather than focus on the companies where you have worked.

DON'T LOOK LIKE AN UNDERGRAD

Unless you have graduated from college within the past three years, the education part of your experience is not as important to prospective employers as your actual work experience. Put the Education section at the end of your resume, not up at the top.

DO BLOW YOUR OWN HORN

A great resume should immediately show what sets you apart from the thousands of applicants submitting their resumes for the same position. A professional resume has to include a few accomplishments or achievements under each job description. Did you open a new market in Mongolia? Expand sales by 380% over last year's figures? Be truthful, of course, but don't forget to include specific examples of your contributions for a job well done.

DON'T LEAVE OFF DATES

A resume will never be taken seriously without dates included next to each position listed. If you have gaps in employment for any reason, try to give a brief explanation in your cover letter, if necessary. Do not eliminate the dates of employment from your resume.

DO INCLUDE AWARDS

List any awards, scholarships, or related commendations under the appropriate section of your resume. Fraternal affiliations and elected positions can also be included, where appropriate, under Education or under the specific job title where you received the awards.

DON'T LIE ABOUT YOUR TITLE

Many companies use different titles that do not necessarily translate outside of that particular corporate structure. But you should not change or enhance your job titles on the resume. If a background check reveals that you have changed your title, inflated your level of responsibility, or fudged the dates that you were actually employed in each position, your credibility will be blown.

*Adapted from Cal Alumni Association <http://alumni.berkeley.edu>

DO KEEP IT BRIEF

No one wants to read through every job you've ever held since stocking groceries in high school. A strong resume should present the experience you've had in the past 10-15 years. Highlight your most recent jobs and consolidate your career past into a strong one or two page resume.

DON'T INCLUDE PERSONAL INFO

Personal information does not belong on a professional resume. Do not include your age, marital status, race, hobbies, or political affiliation on your resume. **DO PROOFREAD** There is nothing worse than a resume filled with typos, grammatical errors, coffee stains, or printing problems. This resume represents your career in one critical document -- take the time to review it carefully before sending it out.

DON'T WHINE

A resume is not the place to mention "sexual harassment," "worker's compensation claim", or "fired for no good reason." Do not include any reasons for leaving your job on the resume.

DO TARGET YOUR AUDIENCE

Your resume should be sent to the companies, agencies, and internet sites that specialize in your particular areas of experience or interest. Just sending out a large mailing may not be the answer. Remember that a professional resume is a marketing tool which can open doors and create opportunities if sent to the correct audience.

Do emphasize ROI (return on investment).

It's a common résumé trap to highlight a "laundry list" of skills you possess instead of showing how you used those abilities to impact the company's bottom line. For example, rather than saying, "trained employees on new timesheet process," you might write, "developed a PowerPoint presentation and gave hands-on instruction to 25 staff members, cutting timesheet-related tasks in half."

Don't think you must keep your résumé to one page.

While the traditional advice has been to limit résumés to one page, most managers today are willing to read past the first page. Nearly half (44 percent) of executives polled by our company said they prefer résumés that are two pages long. Employers are willing to spend more time reviewing application materials in an effort to determine who is most qualified for a certain role. Just don't go overboard: Hiring managers want to see that applicants can prioritize information and concisely convey the depth of their experience.

Do choose your words wisely.

Many organizations electronically scan résumés and search keywords, so, if your experience matches what the company is looking for, try to include the exact phrases and specific applications listed in the job description. If the description asks for an individual who possesses three or more years of administrative experience and a Certified Administrative Professional designation, and you have this background, be sure you include these points in your résumé. This will increase the number of hits your résumé generates during the initial screening process and improve your chances of being invited for an interview.

Do sweat the small stuff.

Eighty-four percent of executives polled by our company said it takes just one or two typographical errors in a résumé to remove a candidate from consideration for a job opening; 47 percent said a single typo could be the deciding factor. So in addition to proofreading your document several times, ask a few close friends to review your résumé before sending it out. They may spot problems your spell-check function didn't catch.