

Your Resume

By Peter Tatham (Executive Director, Career Industry Council of Australia)

Employers often receive several hundred resumes and someone inevitably has the task of reading them all. It is highly likely that someone reading your resume will have developed an impression of you within the first sixty seconds. Your resume is the primary marketing document for selling yourself as a suitable candidate.

STARTING THE PROCESS

Take it seriously. Be prepared to spend several hours drafting and refining your details so that the final results clearly demonstrate and market your skills and suitability for a position. By preparing your resume with care and making it stand out from the crowd, you can make a great first impression with a prospective employer.

Approach your resume writing by using the following broad process:

- gather information on yourself – use brainstorming, records of achievement or participation, copies of transcripts etc to generate the raw material
- think about the audience for your resume – the organisation or industry target
- decide what is relevant to this audience
- select a format and specific section headings that best categorise your information
- draft the content of the resume
- allow an ‘incubation’ period for reflection and review – then revise again!

YOUR AUDIENCE

Your resume is not a static document: it should be re-evaluated in light of a particular audience (employer) each time you use it, as the emphasis on various skills and experiences will vary from employer to employer. If you are not applying for a specific position at the time of preparing your resume, think of the type of job you would most like to apply for and construct the resume to suit that field/organisation. Once you have produced a quality ‘master copy’ of your resume, customising for a particular employer is straightforward.

RESUME FORMAT

All resume formats include core information about personal details, education, work experience and relevant skills/achievements; as well as information about interests (hobbies, sports, community service etc.) However, you can approach the structure for the material in various ways in order to present your ‘story’ in the most effective way. Some typical formats are:

Chronological format – emphasises your previous work experience and is written in order of the positions, beginning with the most recent job and working backwards.

Functional format – describes functions or areas of skill with a lesser emphasis on positions previously held. This format may be useful for people with significant gaps in career activity due to travel, raising children etc.

Combination format – emphasises the strengths of both the chronological and functional.

SECTION HEADINGS

Once you have selected an appropriate format, you can make some decisions about the information you will include and how to present it clearly and powerfully.

First of all, select the information that you think the particular employer will be interested in, then decide how best to group the information under headings. There are no set headings that you have to use. For example, to describe contributions you have made in the community, you might choose 'Community Service', or 'Voluntary Work'. Or, if you have represented the state in sport, choose a heading which does justice to this involvement, such as 'Sporting Achievements' or 'State Representation' depending on what other similar activities you could include under that heading. You should normally have at least two entries under each heading. The most impressive information under each heading should appear first, so you may have to incorporate some subheadings to achieve this.

Sample headings

- Accomplishments/Key Achievements
- Awards/Prizes
- Career Objective
- Community Service
- Computer Skills
- Educational Background
- Language Skills
- Membership of Groups/Societies
- Part-time Work
- Qualifications
- Recreational Interests
- Relevant Skills/Experience
- Sporting Achievements
- Tertiary Education
- Vacation Work
- Voluntary Work
- Work Experience

RESUME CHECKLIST

Check your final resume draft against the following checklist:

- Name and personal details stand out
- 2–4 pages maximum length
- Clean, simple heading style and layout, with white space around text
- Succinct statements and appropriate use of bullet points
- Section headings are carefully selected and logical
- Most powerful information is at front of document
- No typos or grammatical errors
- No factual errors.

FURTHER READING

Bright, J. & Earl, J. 2000, *Resumes that Get Shortlisted: proven strategies to get the job you want*

Bright, J. 2001, *Job Hunting for Dummies*

www.careerone.com.au - (click on 'Job hunting advice')

www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au - (click on 'Jobs and careers')

www.seek.com.au - (click on 'Career resources')