

Write Resumes that Win Job Interviews

By Beverley Neil, **CRW, CERW**

Recruiters and employers agree – due to the standard of resume they often receive it is difficult to identify the value the applicant has to offer to the role. Also, many applicants never receive an interview because the resume is:

- Far too wordy and full of irrelevant information
- Lacking targeted information or achievements to sell the job seeker
- Too general and not tailored to the role being applied for
- Not professionally formatted and full of spelling and typographical mistakes
- Full of jargon/buzz words with no demonstrated depth of skills or achievements

Top Tips to Make Your Resume Stand Out

- # 1** To write a truly strong resume you must have a focus. Naturally, for best effect, your focus should be the position you are applying for.

Even though your resume may be more generally targeted to the industry rather than the role, you can still make a resume stand out as a focussed document by including in the heading the job title and below that in a row at least 3 key strengths you possess that fit the role and the job description. It is also an ideal place to draw attention to a particular qualification, achievement or skill that is vital to the position. For example:

Sales and Marketing Manager

Driving Sales Revenue • Territory Expansion • Team Direction

Boosted Sales 200% within First 6 Months of Tenure

Winner: Sales Champion of the Year 3 Consecutive Years

- # 2** Keep your writing concise and informative. Never waffle – every word must be there for a reason, therefore everything you say must be addressing the position requirements and must be *demonstrating* your ability and/or experience.

For instance, if you're applying for a position as a Personal Assistant you would not include 'typed correspondence'. Naturally you did, it goes with the territory. What you would indicate is whether you were entrusted to type highly confidential documents, or to write correspondence and sign off on it, that you typed it faster or more accurately, formatted important tender or contract documents. You take what is essentially a 'duty' and turn it into an 'achievement'.

- # 3** Keep your resume to between 2 to 4 pages. This is an area that some recruiters do disagree on – some want only 1 page, some want at least 4 or 5 (though they are in the minority!) but if you keep your document concisely written and well laid out and to within 2–4 pages you will keep the 'greater majority' happy.

But no matter the length, it must be and look professional from the start. Fully justify the text, R) justify the dates to keep them in line with the text, add headers and footers with your name and page numbers with a line to 'draw' it off from the rest of the text, keep to plain black with perhaps one carefully used highlight-colour such as burgundy. All little things, but things that give a touch of the professional.

- # 4** When stating your interest or hobby, with a bit of thought you can turn it into a key selling point. For example, if you participate in activities such as rugby, rowing, netball etcetera, try stating it this way –

Rugby: teamwork, responsiveness, fair play

But be aware of any possible conflict between the position and your favourite sport. A love of canyon swinging could be too high-risk for many companies and may well raise doubts about your ability to return to work each Monday, yet canyon swinging could be perfect for an adventure tour guide.

What to Avoid on Your Resume and Cover Letter

- Never include your age or date of birth (it might wrongfully rule you out of the position), your marital status, number of children, nationality or religion. None of these are relevant to your ability to perform the job. They also bring forward the perception, rightly or wrongly, of discrimination.
- Only include a photo if it is totally relevant to the role – and if you do be sure it is a highly professional head and shoulders shot of only you.
- In the cover letter, never include family or personal information or berate your current or past employer. It doesn't matter what the justification is you never criticise another person or company. Be discrete.
- Never neglect attention to detail. Numerous applications are binned because the cover letter was addressed to the wrong person, the name was misspelt, it was addressed to Mr when it was clearly a Ms, even because it was entirely the wrong company. Always double check, triple check and then check again. Even get someone else to check if necessary, but don't do anything that could ruin your chance of receiving that magic phone call.

And finally - Have you ever considered sending a thank you letter after you've had that interview? You can guarantee around 85% of the other candidates haven't thought of it either. So can you think of a better way of ensuring you receive prominence in the interviewer's mind than by sending off a note of thanks for their time - and by way of an after thought happening to mention - very briefly - why you would be perfect for the job?

About The Author:

Beverley Neil, owner of *d'Scriptive Words*, has dual international résumé accreditation, is a multiple award winning résumé writer and author of the [online resume writer's course](#) suitable for both beginners wanting to learn professional resume writing and individuals wanting to write for themselves, friends and family. For more information visit <http://onlineresumewriterscourse.com/>