RESUME CONSTRUCTION & STRATEGY

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Why Resume-Writing is Frustrating

There are a number of reasons why resume-writing is a stressful and intimidating process for many professionals...

- Everyone's an expert; you'll hear tons of contradictory advice

- It's hard to toot your own horn and be objective about yourself

- It can be hard to recall the details of your past jobs and accomplishments

- Many resume firms will try to scare you in order to make a sale

- Hard to determine whether a lack of job hunting results is due to one's resume—or other factors such as how/where you're hunting for leads

The Dirty Little Secret

Multiple studies (and my own experience) suggest that the bulk of a resume's success of failure is based on the "facts" of a person's job titles, education, and industry background — and how closely they relate to the job opening at hand — and <u>not the cosmetic issues and minor resume tweaks most people agonize/stress about!</u>
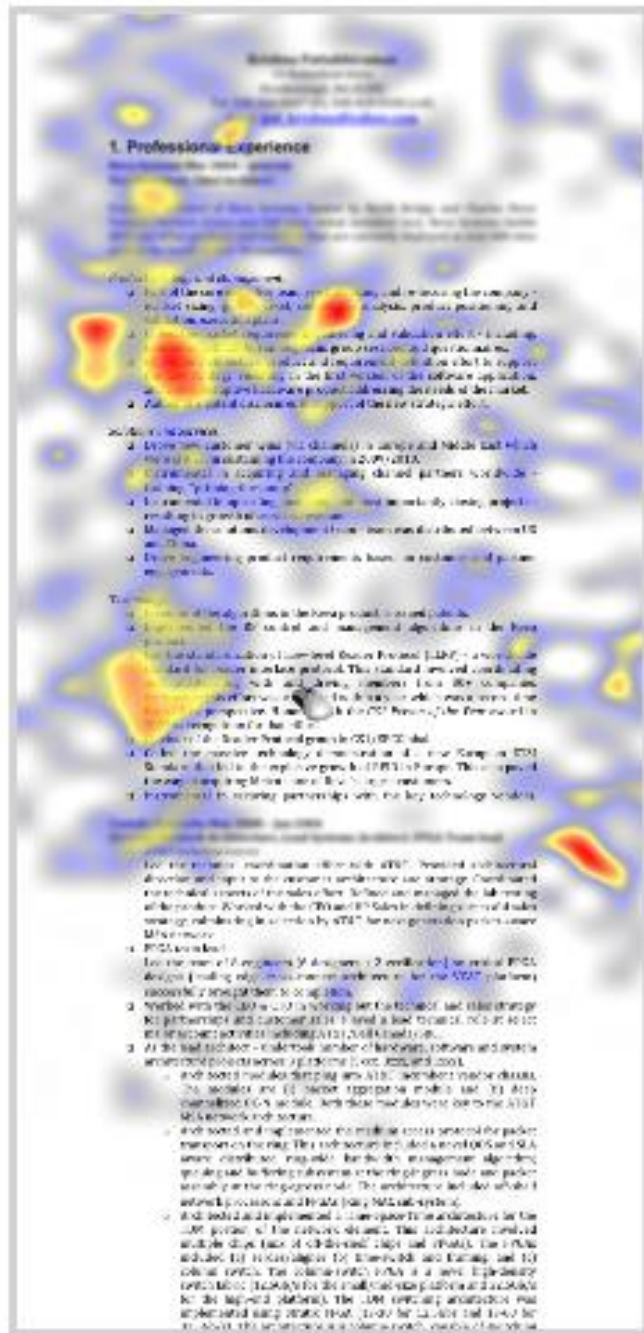
A study conducted by The Ladders used "gaze tracking" technology to evaluate how recruiters screen resumes. They discovered recruiters spend only 6 seconds, on average, scanning a resume -- and that 80% of their review time centers on studying the following data points:

- ✓ Name
- ✓ Current Title/Company
- ✓ Prior Title/Company
- ✓ Employment Dates
- ✓ Education

Is this consistent with your own experience, if you've hired people? What factors do you tend to focus on most in deciding which resumes make the cut – or not?

The 5 Resume Fundamentals

Since again, there is no "perfect" resume approach and you'll never please everybody, I'd encourage you to focus on following these five tried-and-true resume fundamentals. These are the guidelines that enjoy the most consensus among recruiters and hiring managers...

Rule #1: Attractive, Well-Organized Layout

While there are a million different ways one could format a resume, successfully, here are some general layout rules to follow

- **Keep things to 1-2 pages in length, outside of academia**
- **Stick with standard fonts like Times, Arial, Cambria, Calibri**
- **Ensure font size of at least 10pt or more; 11-12pt is ideal**
- **Use margins of at least .4" top/bottom, .7" left/right**
- **Err on the side of using bullets, instead of block paragraphs**
- **Separate the content with headers to make it easier to read**
- **Avoid "flashy" formats and graphics unless you're a designer**
- **No photos on U.S. resumes (unlike international CVs)**
- **Search Google for free or low-cost resume templates**
- **Consider creating a text-only resume for "scanning" systems**

Need a Text-Only Version?

- To streamline the process of submitting your resume to online sites, and avoid formatting glitche, copy/paste all of your resume text into the "Windows Notepad" application (or Apple TextEdit) – then manually move the text around, make it look as good as possible, and save the file in .txt (text-only) format. If you use this version with online systems, it will scan better than fancy, formatted Word/PDF files.

Rule #2: 100% Error-Free

Nothing gets you booted out of consideration faster than a typo on your resume, but sadly, the majority of resumes still contain them

- **Don't trust your spell-checker; they're not foolproof**

- **Have at least 3 people proofread your document**

- **Is your contact info correct? Need to add your LinkedIn URL?**

- **Have you punctuated all of your bullets the same way?**

- **Is your text consistently justified left, full, or center?**

- **Are your bullets/sections indented the same amount?**

- **Are the hyphens in your dates consistent in size/spacing?**

- **Have you avoided first-person pronouns (I, We, Our)?**

- **Are your verb tenses (past/present) appropriate?**

- **Have you spelled out any unusual or unfamiliar acronyms?**

Rule #3: Clear Positioning/Focus

Your resume is an advertisement, of sorts; it needs to immediately communicate the "product" you're offering to potential employers

- **Avoid "objective" statements — they're outdated and tend to be full of clichés that turn employers off**

- **Instead, use a "headline" and/or "tagline" at the top that clearly indicates your desired title(s) and job level, as well as your industry expertise, if relevant:**

  e.g. Business Analyst / Business Intelligence Specialist
  e.g. Senior Project Manager – Energy Industry
  e.g. Training Manager – Construction & Manufacturing

- **If space allows, include a short summary outlining your background, key strengths, and/or unique differentiators; what sets you apart and what specific types of problems do you specialize in resolving for companies?**

Rule #4: All the Right Keywords

Make sure your resume contains a ton of relevant language, buzzwords, and terminology to help it survive the scanning/screening process

- **Include a list of 10-15 keywords/competencies at the top of your resume and then customize these terms, as necessary, to match the language used in the job ads you're targeting**

- **Don't make assumptions or overlook obvious terms; scanners and HR screeners don't always read between the lines**

- **Avoid really basic strengths or clichés like results-oriented, dynamic, team player, excellent interpersonal skills, etc.**

- **Recognize that the language you use on your resume can be a key factor that contributes to age discrimination**

- **Spell out any uncommon acronyms or internal corporate jargon that your readers are not likely to understand**

Sources of Keywords

How do you make sure your resume isn't missing any important terms related to your field?

1) Study relevant job ads and see what language is used most often

2) Browse resume samples at www.indeed.com/resumes for ideas

3) Review LinkedIn profiles of peers to see what terminology they use

4) Browse industry literature, blogs, and websites for inspiration

5) Use online resume tools like the three shown to the right to analyze your resume language for gaps...
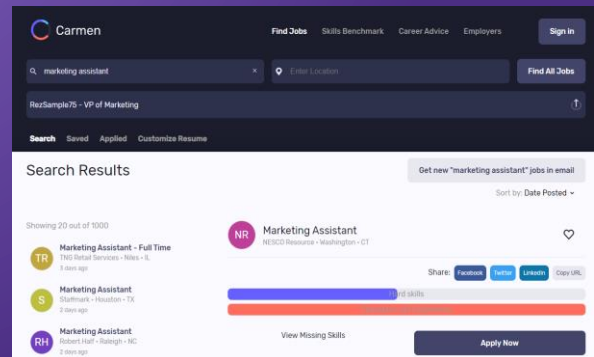
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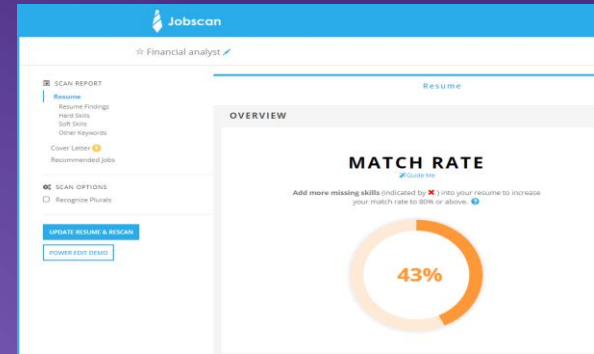
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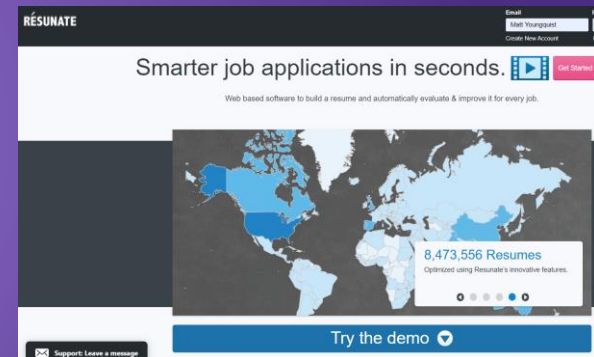
www.carmen.co

Rule #5: Detailed Accomplishments

Lastly, your resume should be a "highlight reel" that shows your impact and demonstrates your contributions at each place you've worked

- Don't just show the employer you *did* a job; demonstrate to them that you did a *good* job or a *great* job

- Include numbers whenever possible – dollars, time savings, percentages, quotas, quality rates, size of teams, etc.

- In lieu of numbers, other specific details (e.g. names of key accounts, software utilized, timelines) can add credibility

- While rare, some folks include snippets from LinkedIn testimonials or letters of recommendation they've received

- Recognize that accomplishments are what will separate you from other candidates with highly similar qualifications

Alas, Everything Else is a Judgment Call!

Beyond these five fundamentals, almost all other resume decisions will depend on your unique situation, strategy, and personal preferences

- Explain gaps in your career?

- Mention why you left each job?

- Trim out your early job history?

- Share your outside interests?

- Include volunteer work?

- Describe each past employer?

- Add months to your work dates?

- Include unfinished degrees?

- Use creative, edgy copywriting?

- Try a "functional" resume style?

New and Emerging Trends

While resume methodology hasn't actually changed all that much in recent years, a few small trends worth mentioning include....

- Most people now leave out their address and simply list city/state

- You don't need to include or mention references anymore

- There is a trend toward the usage of one-page resumes, but it's optional

- It's critical to list specific software and technologies you've used

- Some people now include links to the websites of their employers – or to online samples of their work

FINAL QUESTIONS?