



## Writing your Resume

No one can be sure about what is coming around the next corner in their career. That's why it's important to have an updated resume on hand – just in case the job of a lifetime comes calling.

In theory a resume is a simple document outlining your employment history, your strengths and includes your contact details. Many people seem to forget this. People include information that is irrelevant or complicate the document so much that the resume becomes cluttered and difficult to follow.

### Layout

The format you choose for your resume should allow the reader to move from the general information of your career (eg where you worked and when) to more specific information (what you achieved and how you achieved it) with ease.

When formatting your resume choose standard fonts (Arial, Verdana, Times New Roman or Garamond for example) and ensure that your choice of font size is reasonable – size 11 or 12 is a safe choice.

Break the sections of your resume with headings. Either have them in bold or underlined – not both. The combination is distracting to the reader.

### Content

There is an expected amount and type of information you need to include in any resume. One thing to keep in mind is the end reader and their workload. Yours won't be the only resume they will be looking at, they may have dozens or hundreds of documents to go through. Bearing this in mind you need to make their job as easy as possible. Don't waste the most effective position in your resume on your complete contact details, hobbies and education.

Put your name, email and contact number (landline or mobile) in the header of each page. Later in the document you can include your complete contact details and outline your education history. In most cases the reader isn't that interested in the school you went to or the suburb you live in.

There are obviously exceptions to every rule and that's why you include them, just not in the best real estate in your document.

While on contact details, don't use 'funny' email addresses. Stick to something based on your name – eg. john.smith@mailserver.com.au rather than scrawnychicken@mailserver.com.au. On a similar note if you have voice mail attached to your home or mobile numbers get rid of any joke answering messages. You're trying to promote yourself to a prospective employer, each part of the package (that's you) needs to be as professional as your resume.

Most recruiters will tell you not to include your birth date with your personal details. You don't want a prospective employer ruling you out because you're seen as too 'young' or 'old' for the position. Your experience and skills should speak for themselves.

### **Length**

The length of your resume is determined in large part by the length of your career. The ideal suggested length is between 3 – 6 pages. Obviously if you are straight out of school your resume will be brief and that's fine.

More than 6 pages and your resume is becoming too long. If you have long running professional career you may want to include only the latest 10 – 15 years.

If you feel you need to include more of your employment history you may want to have two versions of your resume. The first is a condensed version going back no further than 15 years with the addition of a summary outlining your other experience. You should also include a phrase along the lines of a 'full resume is available upon request'.

A reader wants to see the path of your career – how you ended up where you are today. They also want to see the things you've achieved along the way and how you've done them.

### **Key Strengths**

The aim of this section of a resume is to provide a snapshot for your reader, outlining what you would bring to the position. The most effective way to manage this is through bullet points. There is no perfect number of points – it will be based on your career to date as well as the type of role you are applying for.

One tip however – make them relevant and tightly worded. Everyone says they are a team player and have excellent communication skills. These types of phrases mean nothing anymore.

Back up your strengths listed in this section with examples later in your resume. It's no good saying you're a motivated team player if you don't have a single example of working in a team later in your resume.

Some examples:

- Advanced computer skills including the Microsoft office suite, ACT! And Photoshop gained through on the job training and tertiary education
- 6 years experience in key account management both in the IT Hardware and Telecommunications industries

## Career Overview

A career overview acts as another snapshot into your resume. This time as a glimpse into your past employment history, rather than your key strengths. Just like the Key Strengths section the aim is to have an employer put you into the 'second round' pile by giving them as much relevant information about you as possible.

An example:

A sales and marketing professional with experience in a number of industries, including Property, IT and Media. With a history of building new business and developing key accounts, I have consistently exceeded targets. Having recently finished a property economics degree I am seeking a new career challenge.

## Professional History

This is the meat of your resume. Here you'll outline your career history in detail. You should choose a method that is easy to read and includes all the information you need.

Start with your most recent position and work backwards. The most common layout is Job title, Employer, Date

Eg. **Key Account Manager, Alto Media, June 2001 – April 2004**

If you have worked for a large, well known company (ANZ Bank, AV Jennings, Integral Energy) you don't need to explain what the company does. However, if you worked for a smaller lesser known organisation you may want to offer a short explanation of what the company does.

Offer a brief description of what you did within the company. Don't write out the job description for each position. This only tells people what you were meant to do – not what you did.

The rest of the section should be made up of subheadings with points or brief paragraphs detailing your time with the company. This information is normally broken up into sections like Responsibilities and Achievements.

## Responsibilities

The key to this section is including those things that are actual responsibilities. Listing attendance at sales meetings or dealing with customer complaints are not responsibilities. However' if you ran the sales meetings or were in charge of a customer service team that's different, list them.

## Achievements

Achievements are a little trickier to detail than responsibilities. Meeting your KPI's isn't an achievement, neither is doing the job you were hired to do.

An achievement is something that makes you stand out from the other people you worked with. If you beat your sales target by 25% every month for 12 months – that's an achievement. If you made a series of recommendations that, when put into play, made a significant difference to earnings or bottom line – that's an achievement.

Achievements are where you really stand out. They show a prospective employer not only that you can do your job, but that you can contribute to the business in other ways.

## Education and Training

The best format for the Education section is to list the name of your qualification, Where you achieved it followed by the year you received it. Eg **B.A. (Communications), University of Western Sydney, 1999**

Work from your highest qualification down. If you are a recent school leaver you should include your high school history, other wise leave it out.

Don't forget the TAFE courses, industry training or in-house courses you have undertaken either.

## Referees

You should have no more than four referees. Ideally they will be your direct manager or another superior within the companies you have worked in.

The best layout for referees is Name, Company, position they held at the time and a contact number.

Eg. **Michael Blank, Alto Media, Sales Director, 0417 277 03X**

Whatever you do make sure that your referees are happy to be used as a reference. Let them know what the position is and fill them in on what you have written in you rresume.