

Résumé & Cover Letter Tips

Kingston Ross Pasnak LLP

What to include in your résumé

- What to Include on Your Résumé
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Contact Detail

Ensure that it is current and provide several options for contacting you (home, cell & business phone numbers.

Career Objective

This statement should be employer centered vs. self-centered. It communicates what you want to do for the employer, as opposed to what you want from them.

Summary of Qualifications

This section should immediately follow the Career Objective. It summarizes the essence of your qualifications in 3-5 bulleted items. It attempts to draw the reader's attention to your key qualifications, so remember to put the most important points first.

Education

List the most recent first. Be clear about whether a degree is complete or incomplete. If incomplete, state "Completed 1 year towards MBA in business administration". If you are in the process of obtaining education, you can state, "Grant MacEwan University - Currently enrolled in Human Resource Management Diploma Program". You can then go on to list the courses that you have successfully completed.

Work History

Begin with your most recent work.

1. Use action verbs and action statements to describe your experience
 - Developed, maintained and distributed numerous tracking reports to various management

levels within the organization

- Established
 - Designed
 - Maintained
 - Trained
 - Ensured
 - Coordinated
 - Prepared
2. The key word should appear at the beginning of each bullet. You can rearrange statements to emphasize different skill sets.

EG - Administrative Assistant

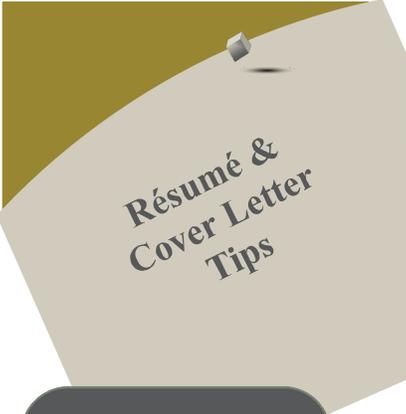
- Performed general office duties (filing, faxing, photocopying)
 - Maintained access database
 - Prepared letters and memos for senior management
 - Ensured minutes were correctly recorded during board meetings.
 - Facilitated workshops
3. Help the reader organize their thoughts through the use of formatting tools such as bullets, spacing and;

Boldfacing - to highlight skills

Underscoring - Job Title

CAPITALIZING - work places





Résumé & Cover Letter Tips

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What to include in your résumé cont.

Activities/Interests

This shows an employer how well rounded you are as a person. This information can also act as an icebreaker during the interview.

Résumé length

As long as it needs to be to capture you and your experience. Remember, a prospective employer is scanning your résumé; the longer it is, the more likely that they will lose interest.

Key Points to Remember

- Your résumé is only skimmed over, not read, so you only have about 30 seconds to make a good impression on a potential employer
- The appearance of your résumé is the first thing that the employer notices
- Don't make your résumé confusing; employers may get annoyed

- Make the information in your résumé concise and easy to grasp
- Make sure that your career objective and summary of qualifications match the position that you are applying for.
- Ask yourself "So what?" about the information you have provided to make certain that it is clear and relevant.
- Make sure that large gaps in time are identified, eg, "Between May 1995 - June 1996 I traveled extensively through western Europe and Asia".

Practicalities: The Do and Don't Section

DO

- Be prepared to explain gaps in your work experience
- Pay close attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Include month and year in your employment history
- Manage the length of your résumé
- First impressions matter. Make your résumé visually appealing and easy to read.
- Have your résumé critiqued by others.
- Submit a clean and original copy, or high quality photocopy on white or ivory colored paper.
- Put yourself in the reader's shoes. Is it easy to follow and understand?
- Describe your experience with statements that begin with action verbs.
- Submit your résumé in the fashion that it is requested and not in what is more convenient to you; this is also a first impression
- Look on the internet (www.workopolis.com or www.monster.ca)

DON'T

- Misrepresent yourself by over-inflating your education or experience
- Leave out dates of employment
- Submit a résumé that contains only skill statements. Employers want to see work history.
- Send photographs
- Include irrelevant information such as height, weight, age or marital status (This information is private and does not need to be included).
- Submit a résumé which contains a career objective that does not match the job that you are applying for.
- Submit a poorly photocopied, outdated résumé.
- Bind with special materials (Duo Tangs); a staple does the trick.
- Use colored paper or gimmicks.

Cover Letters - Are They Still Relevant?

Should you bother writing a cover letter? It's a question being asked often these days. With the popularity of social profiles and resume scanning, cover letters are under scrutiny.

Candidates wonder if it's worth the effort: maybe their carefully crafted letter won't get read. Recruiting firms might only pass it on to employers if asked for one; if employers are swamped with resumes, they may consider the cover letter unnecessary.

Yet strong arguments remain in favour of preparing a tightly written cover letter.

Always Write a Cover Letter Even If You Don't Send One

Tara Orchard is a career coach and social media specialist. Now located in Winnipeg, her wide-ranging clientele is from across the country.

According to Tara, it is always useful to create a formal cover letter. "Although you may decide not to include a copy with your application, it forces you to focus on the key points of who you are and what you have to offer."

Tara adds that parts of the cover letter can be applied for other purposes. "Portions can be inserted into your social media profiles, used for introducing yourself while networking, or when replying during interviews."

She suggests that you include a cover letter when responding to posted advertisements. Also when making unsolicited applications to employers. That way you cover your bases if one is required.

As for style, "I prefer first person conversational," says Tara. "For instance, my phrasing would be 'I am an accomplished motivator' rather than starting with 'Ms. Orchard is...'" Letting some of your personality show can serve to humanize you.

If You do Send a Cover Letter, Make Sure It's Well Written

Your cover letter is the first thing employers see when they open your materials. Avoid these 10 mistakes, and make your first impression a good and lasting one.

Mistake #1: Overusing "I"

Your cover letter is not your autobiography. The focus should be on how you meet an employer's needs, not on your life story. Avoid the perception of

being self-centered by minimizing your use of the word "I," especially at the beginning of your sentences.

Mistake #2: Using a Weak Opening

When writing a cover letter, job seekers frequently struggle with . This often results in a feeble introduction lacking punch and failing to grab the reader's interest. Consider this example:

- **Weak:** Please consider me for your sales representative opening.
- **Better:** Your need for a top-performing sales representative is an excellent match to my three-year history as a #1-ranked, multimillion-dollar producer.



Mistake #3: Omitting Your Top Selling Points

A cover letter is a sales letter that sells you as a candidate. Just like the resume, it should be compelling and give the main reasons you should be called for an interview. Winning cover letter tips include emphasizing your top accomplishments or creating subheadings culled from the job posting. For example:

Your Ad Specifics: Communication skills

I Offer: Five years of public speaking experience and an extensive background in executive-level report.

Your Ad Specifics: The need for a strong computer background.

I Offer: Proficiency in all MS Office applications with additional expertise in Web site development and design.

Cover Letters - Common Mistakes

Mistake #4: Making It Too Long

If your cover letter exceeds one page, you may be putting readers to sleep. A great cover letter is concise but compelling, and respects the reader's time.

Mistake #5: Repeating Your Resume Word for Word

Your cover letter shouldn't regurgitate what's on your resume. Reword your cover letter statements to avoid dulling your resume's impact. Consider using the letter to tell a brief story, such as "My Toughest Sale" or "My Biggest Technical Challenge."

Mistake #6: Being Vague

If you're replying to an advertised opening, reference the specific job title in your cover letter. The person reading your letter may be reviewing hundreds of letters for dozens of different jobs. Make sure all the content in your letter supports how you will meet the employer's specific needs.

Mistake #7: Forgetting to Customize

If you're applying to a number of similar positions, chances are you're tweaking one letter and using it for multiple openings. That's fine, as long as you customize each letter. Don't forget to update the company, job and contact information -- if Mr. Jones is addressed as Mrs. Smith, he won't be impressed.

Mistake #8: Ending on a Passive Note

When possible, put your future in your own hands with a promise to follow up. Instead of asking readers to call you, try a statement like this: I will follow up with you in a few days to answer any preliminary questions you may have. In the meantime, you may reach me at (555) 555-5555.

Mistake #9: Being Rude

Your cover letter should thank the reader for his time and consideration.

Mistake #10: Forgetting to Sign the Letter

It is proper business etiquette (and shows attention to detail) to sign your letter. However, if you are sending your cover letter and resume via email or the Web, a signature isn't necessary.

Traditional Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Summarize your work experience.
3. What is it about this position that appeals to you.
4. Please give me an example of a project, assignment or experience you have completed in this field/industry.
5. What qualities do you think are necessary for someone in this position?
6. What personal qualities do you take pride in?
7. Give me examples of strengths you bring to the table.
8. Describe any weaknesses you could improve upon.
9. What are your long-term goals?
10. Are you involved in any clubs or organizations? How has this benefited you?
11. Is there anything else I should know about you?

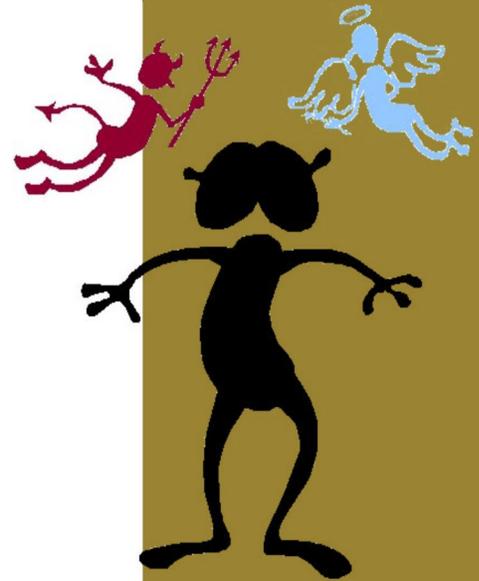


William Jennings Bryan

*Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice.
It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved.*

Behaviour Descriptive Interview Questions

1. Give me an example of a difficult situation you have had to deal with. Describe how you handled this situation at the time and the follow-up. What was the end result?
2. Give me an example of how you have handled difficult people. Difficult situations. Conflict resolutions.
3. Describe your management style.
4. Describe how you manage your time.
5. Describe how you motivate people to produce their maximum. Give an example of how you dealt with someone you couldn't motivate.
6. Describe your communication style with staff, co-workers, management.
7. Describe your most stressful situation in the past year or two. How was it handled (professional or personal)?
8. A business network is very important. Describe to me how you build and maintain your network. Describe how you would establish strategic alliances/partnerships with other key players.
9. Give me an example of the types of reports you have prepared.
10. Give me an example of the types of meetings you have facilitated. Describe the process you used to facilitate these meetings. What methods did you use to analyze and report back on these meetings?
11. Do you feel that you are a "big picture" person or a "small picture" person? What steps (process) would you take to get to the big picture?
12. Describe how you react when you get negative feedback.
13. How do you know and how would we know when you are stressed?
14. What do you do to cope with stress?
15. When have you been frustrated at work? How did you cope?
16. Describe something you did to develop a team you were on.
17. This job involves teamwork; tell me how you function as a team member.
18. Describe your strengths as a team member.
19. Describe something you have done to improve communication at your workplace.
20. This job involves being self-motivated. How do you motivate yourself? What works best for you? How can others motivate you?
21. Describe a recent change and how you coped.
22. Describe a challenge you faced at work and how you coped.
23. What was your most important or most valuable learning last year?
24. What are your plans for future self-development.
25. What is something you would like to learn or improve, why and how?
26. How would your current supervisor or team members describe you?
27. How would you and your supervisor rate your flexibility, responsibility, stress management and ability to relate to others.
28. Describe something you are proud of. How did you achieve this?
29. What do you do for enjoyment and relaxation?



Ready for
these ?

Examples
prepared ?

Interview Questions to Ask the Employer

1. How would you describe the responsibilities of the position?
2. How would you describe a typical week/day in this position?
3. Is this a new position? If not, what did the previous employee go on to do?
4. What is the company's management style?
5. Who does this position report to? If I am offered the position, can I meet him/her?
6. How many people work in this office/department?
7. How much travel is expected?
8. Is relocation a possibility?
9. What is the typical work week? Is overtime expected?
10. What are the prospects for growth and advancement?
11. How does one advance in the company?
12. Are there any examples?
13. What do you like about working here?
14. What don't you like about working here and what would you change?
15. Would you like a list of references?
16. If I am extended a job offer, how soon would you like

me to start?

17. What can I tell you about my qualifications?
18. When can I expect to hear from you?
19. Are there any other questions I can answer for you?
20. Do you have any reservations about my qualifications?

Interview Questions **NOT** to Ask

1. What does this company do? (Do your research ahead of time!).
2. If I get the job when can I take time off for vacation? (Wait until you get the offer to mention prior commitments).
3. Can I change my schedule if I get the job? (If you need to figure out the logistics of getting to work don't mention it now...)
4. Did I get the job? (Don't be impatient. They'll let you know).
5. Don't ask about compensation/remuneration unless it has been posted. When they get to the final stage, they will let you know the range and further discussions will occur.

**WE HOPE YOU WILL FIND THIS INFORMATION TO BE USEFUL IN
YOUR CAREER PURSUIT. THE BEST OF LUCK TO YOU!**

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