

The Resume - A Marketing Tool

Every job seeker is familiar with resume writing. Resumes are usually a short, to-the-point synopsis of work experience, skills set, qualifications, interests, education, and career goals.

How much time does it take to create a resume?

Approximately 1-2 days depending on how well you know the industry you are targeting. As with the world of work, upgrading the information on your resume is a continual, and generally speaking is a "work-in-progress".

How much time do employers spend looking over your resume?

60% of employers spend less than 5 minutes looking at resumes. According to survey done by Account Temps (one of the largest Temp Agencies) approximately 1 out of every 3 executives (32%) reported spending less than 2 minutes on resumes. Only 3% of executives reported spending an hour or more reading a resume.

Based on these facts what can a job seeker do to market themselves better?

Keep your resume short and to the point. Get everything that the employer would find interesting on the first page, preferably highlighting the obvious keywords or key-skills in a "HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS" section near the top of the resume. Remember to be objective and to research your key-skills carefully. Your resume should stand out and quickly convey information at a glance. Practice using your resume with strangers and see if they can remember what you can offer them after 2 minutes of scanning your resume. For example when buying a book you usually refer to the summary at the back cover to see if it is worth buying. In essence a "HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS" is like a summary that quickly conveys essential information to the employer.

What is the most important aspect of resume writing?

Many people have worked different jobs within a short time period. Job seekers must try and market themselves as a package, presenting a group of skills rather than a list of job duties.

How should I list my skills on the resume?

The employers want to scan your resume and pull out your skills right away. The easier you make this for them the more chance you have to land an interview. Finding out what key-skills prospective employers are looking for is crucial to resume writing. Those key-skills can be gleaned from: (A) informational interviews with people in the field (B) researching job postings, or (C) examining labour market information. Job postings for this research can be found on the HRDC website under "Work/Jobs": www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca

Why must a resume be focused? Can't I have a "general" resume?

Identifying your personal qualities and researching and narrowing compatible options in the field of your choice is crucial to any job search. When you want to narrow options you have to focus. Skills can be transferred from one job to the next but employers are looking for a focused resume. If you were at the grocery store and had 20 brands to pick from would you buy the "generic" brand of soup or would you rather buy a "focused" brand of quality soup like Campbells. Employers are more impressed by a resume that caters to their needs. Similarly if you want your resume to be picked out you have to stand out.

Where can I see examples of resumes?

There are tons of websites that show examples of completed resumes. Here is one:

<http://cpp.camden.rutgers.edu/resume.html>

There are also several good books at Chapters that outline successful resume writing techniques. Because they can be expensive you should visit an employment resource centres that let's you read them for free. Also, check online at www.therecruit.com for an online tutorial for building resumes.

TIP:

Getting feedback on your resume is crucial to its success in sparking employer interest. There are several ways to do this:

1. Conduct an informational interview with somebody in the field to get feedback on your resume.
2. If you have faxed your resume you can sometimes call the receiving company to make sure they have received it. Depending on the industry you can sometimes quickly inquire as to whether your resume offers what they need.
3. Contact employers who didn't call you in for an interview. Ask them for feedback on your resume you can improve or change.
4. Talk to Employment Counsellors. Find out if they have specialized in developing targeted resumes for your industry. Their knowledge and expertise can be invaluable as long as what they tell you matches what employers want.
5. Remember that resumes are marketing tools. The purpose of a resume is to help you land the job interview. Study self-marketing methods and don't be afraid to apply new techniques if they seem appropriate.

Next Week:

Next week we will continue on and discuss some of the basic questions that appear in job interviews. Having answers to those questions could mean the difference between employment and unemployment for most people. I am also continuing to compile a rated list of temp agencies to be published soon. If there is anyone who would like to contribute please feel free to call me at 977-5477, or e-mail me at jakes@pepjob.com.