

A photograph of four business professionals standing in a row against a plain, light-colored wall. From left to right: a woman in a grey dress holding a folder and papers; a man in a grey suit holding a tablet; a woman in a beige blazer and skirt with her arms crossed; and a man in a striped shirt and blue tie holding a brown folder. A dark blue banner is overlaid on the top of the image.

VOLUME ONE

CAREER TIPS

FOR JOB SEARCH SUCCESS

Cutting-edge strategies for job seekers from the experts at the National Résumé Writers' Association, the only nonprofit organization for professional résumé writers.



INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered what to put at the top of a résumé or puzzled over selecting the most impactful keywords? Are you unhappy in your job or indecisive about which career direction to take? Did you finally earn your MBA, but now you're worried about appearing overqualified? From creating a winning résumé to preparing for the interview, *Career Tips for Job Search Success* draws on the expertise of leading résumé writers from the National Résumé Writers' Association (NRWA) to answer your most pressing job search questions and concerns.



The guidance you will find here represents our top career advice from 2019, compiled monthly from the Q&As on the NRWA's "Ask the Experts" webpage. Each contributor brings professional experience working directly with job seekers to help solve real-life job search challenges.

We hope you find the information included in this eBook informative and beneficial and that it will become your trusted guide throughout your job search... And, if you don't find the information you're looking for here, go to the "Ask the Experts" webpage at <https://résuméexperts.thenrwa.com/ask-the-experts/>. Submit your question and our experts will respond – and you just might see your question featured in next year's Career Strategies e-book!

About the National Résumé Writers' Association

As the only nonprofit, volunteer-driven association for professional résumé writers, the National Résumé Writers' Association (NRWA) has set the national standard for excellence in the résumé writing industry.

Jean Austin
NRWA Education Chair (2018-2020)

FOREWORD

While many of the general public are still surprised to hear that the art of résumé writing has stimulated the growth of an entire segment of the career services industry, it isn't as novel as one might think. There is evidence, in fact, that it was inspired by Leonardo da Vinci who, before he was famous for his artistry as a painter, made his living as an armorer—an inventor of weapons.

In what we consider an essential part of the hiring process today, Leonardo wrote a handwritten letter in 1482 to the Duke of Milan seeking his patronage. His remarkable letter listed his skills and experience and most importantly, called out the benefits his skills would produce for his prospective employer. In other words, Leonardo da Vinci became the first person in recorded history to write what we know today as a résumé—a word inspired by the French word for summary.

The résumé trend continued with wealthy patrons in the 1500s and 1600s, encouraging the submission of résumés from the skilled artisans and laborers they sought to hire. It doesn't take too much imagination to suppose that enterprising writers of the day may have assisted in writing these documents for the otherwise widely illiterate population.



Self Portrait, Leonardo da Vinci

Fast forward to the present day. In 1997, the National Résumé Writers' Association (NRWA) was founded as the first and only nonprofit professional trade association for résumé writers in the world. For more than twenty years, the mission of the NRWA has remained unchanged: to increase the visibility of the industry, encourage ethical practices, promote excellence, and raise industry standards through peer marketing and training. While résumé writing as a profession was still relatively uncommon in 1997, it has grown over the years, with new members joining the NRWA every month.

Résumé writers come from diverse backgrounds: business, human resources, recruiting, and career counseling are common. Many résumé writers hold advanced degrees and career coaching credentials in addition to the prestigious professional résumé writing certification—Nationally Certified Résumé Writer (NCRW)—offered by the NRWA. Acknowledging that the career services industry is not immune to digital disruption, the NRWA recently rolled out its groundbreaking Nationally Certified Online Profile Expert (NCOPE) certification. Members who have earned the NCRW credential have demonstrated the highest standards of résumé writing excellence. Members who have earned the NCOPE have been trained and certified to help job seekers unleash the power of LinkedIn. Besides these two premier certifications, many of our members have earned other professional résumé writing and career coaching credentials as well.

All NRWA members are true résumé experts committed to upholding the highest ethical and professional standards. The NRWA offers members ongoing professional development opportunities utilizing industry-leading webinars, training programs, resources, and conferences. This allows NRWA professionals to stay abreast of changes in the careers industry and best serve our clients and business partners.

In 2018, the Public Image Committee of the NRWA rolled out RésuméExperts.TheNRWA.com, a site dedicated to serving the job seeking public. Visitors to the site will find valuable information to help them understand the value of working with a professional résumé writer and have access to our member database to search and find a professional who will meet their needs.

The "Ask the Experts" section of RésuméExperts.TheNRWA.com is a valuable resource for job seekers, providing an easy way to get answers from our expert members to questions about writing a résumé, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile, as well as the entire job searching process. This book is a compilation of

the first year of questions answered by the many career services experts who comprise the NRWA membership.

As da Vinci demonstrated in 1482, there is a real artistry involved in writing a compelling and persuasive résumé, and NRWA members are steeped in the craft. The résumé experts at the NRWA are committed to the career success of the job seekers we work with and offer tremendous inside perspective and advice to help job seekers navigate the ever-more complex job market and achieve long-term career goals.

We hope you learn from the advice in this book and we invite you to visit RésuméExperts.TheNRWA.com to ask your own questions, which you may find featured on our blog and included in a future volume of this series.

Michelle Dumas

Past NRWA President (2017) and past Chair, NRWA Public Image Committee (2016, 2018)

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Chapter One

A WINNING RÉSUMÉ

Your #1 Marketing Tool

A good résumé does more than just relate your career history. It catches the attention of recruiters and hiring managers, demonstrates your unique value, and gets past the electronic filters when you apply online. It tells your story and helps you stand out in a competitive job market. That's a lot to think about. The advice in this chapter will get you started.



I'm not sure what to put at the top of a résumé. What are your recommendations to make sure I capture an employer's attention?



Answers from our Experts:

- The top of your résumé should contain: your name, contact information, and your professional brand. Through use of a headline and career summary paragraph, a reader should be able to understand your unique value to a potential employer within a minute. Be authentic and self-aware in your descriptions. Tell your career story as it matters to THIS employer.

Angela Watts, MyPro Business Services

- I like to start with a statement that summarizes who you are as a professional and follow with a short paragraph that showcases the highlights of what you've done and what you have to offer. This will vary based on your experience and industry, but it should always start building a story that convinces the reader to keep reading. Be mindful of using keywords the screening software wants to see as well.

Scott Hulshizer, The Résumé Expert

- Put the title of the position you seek at the top in large, bold letters. Underneath that, provide a value statement that lists up to three of the most important impacts you can achieve for an employer. Then, summarize your related experience, provide a short statement of your leadership skills and values, and share a few of your strengths. Avoid over-used words such as "team player," "detail-oriented."

Holly Genser

- If your audience reads only the first third of the first page of your résumé, they should know everything there is to know about you—the rest are supporting details. Start with your name and contact info, then write a compelling headline and statement about what uniquely makes

you the best at what you do, framing the entire career message you are delivering in the rest of the document.

Amy Adler, Five Strengths Career Transition Experts

- After your name and contact details, put your career goal up front (“VP of Operations,” “Sales Leader,” etc.) followed by a short headline that defines your brand, such as “Delivering Over-Quota Revenue & Margin Growth.” Keep your résumé summary to a few lines that showcase your core skills and achievements. You might list the industries in which you’ve worked or your reputation among colleagues.

Laura Smith-Proulx, An Expert Résumé

- A strong résumé beginning includes contact information (name, LinkedIn profile URL, mobile number, and email), a targeted job title heading, a 1 to 2 line relevant, achievement-laden summary paragraph, and core competencies that are bulleted under the summary paragraph. This format encapsulates what you want and why you are qualified in a quick, effective manner.

Lisa Rangel, Chameleon Résumés

- Use your target position to select about 3 to 5 relevant accomplishments; don’t waste this valuable space with qualifications that aren’t essential to your dream job. Highlight those achievements in a dynamic, well-written profile at the top of the résumé, and keep in mind that every word should help convince the reader that you’re a top candidate for that job. Make a stellar first impression!

Alexia Scott, A Winning Résumé, LLC

- Outside of your contact information, you need to answer the following questions: What do you do? What do you specialize in? How much experience do you have in your chosen field? This information can easily be displayed in your branding statement, which typically appears below your name and contact information. Stick to 2 to 4 short sentences to immediately capture the employers’ attention!

Chelsea Wiltse, Seasoned and Growing, LLC

- Answer the questions: Who are you, and why should I hire you? Write a succinct headline stating your title, responsibilities, and scope. Mention accomplishments hiring managers would love most, including compelling metrics. Awards and honors go here, too. Add a Core Competencies list to show your skills. Students should feature leadership experience and a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

Columba Smith, Columba Smith Résumés

- Capture an employers’ attention with your unique value! Underneath your name and contact information, add a headline (i.e., the job you applying to) followed by a statement that gives a snapshot of what YOU can bring to the role to solve company points. Drop generics and be specific. It is your unique blend of qualifications as it relates to the target role that will win the interview.

Meg Applegate, Hinge Résumé Collective

- The top section of your résumé is prime real estate. This is your billboard, a perfect location to put your brand headline and immediately draw the reader in. The headline should reflect the title of the position you are applying for as closely possible. Adding a short tagline directly underneath that highlights the value you bring and is a great way to distinguish yourself from other candidates.

Deirdre Rock, Composed Career, LLC



Where do you place internships on a résumé?



Answers from our Experts:

- Internships are valuable work that should be included in your history, especially if you are a recent grad or making a career change. Include them chronologically or topically as it makes sense. Be certain to reflect the details of the great work and impact or outcomes as measured by quantitative or qualitative results.

Sharon Glennon

- Internships can go under your professional experience, although if you've held multiple internships, you can create a separate "Internships" section. For the most part, including internships is advantageous if you're in your first OR second job in your target industry. Yet, if you're making a career change, then it's in your best interest to emphasize relevant internships that you've undertaken.

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- Internships, if paid, can be listed under your work experiences and treat them as such. List your "job" title, the organization, what you were tasked to do, the challenge you had, how you overcame it, the result, and the impact it had. You can also list your internships under Volunteer Service and use the same strategy. Best of luck!

Camille Roberts, CC Career Services

- Internships are extremely IMPORTANT, especially if you are a recent graduate with little, or no, job/industry related work experience. I consider an internship a "job." They belong in the Work History section, like all other jobs, and are listed by date in reverse chronological order. List your quantified accomplishments just as you do with other jobs.

Donald Blum, Blum & Associates, LLC

- Internship placement is about the value it adds to a résumé. For new graduates, internships are work history, so place them in the Experience section. If the organization you interned with has a high brand equity, (e.g., NASA), you may add it in the Summary. Internships become less relevant over time, so seasoned workers might place it as a mention with their education at the end of the résumé.

Cathy Lanzalaco, Inspire Careers

- (1) If the internships are impressive or extensive, or if you have limited experience, you can format them in the same manner as you would a job. (2) If there are several or many internships, you may consider aggregating them into a special internship section. (3) If the internships are relatively minor and/or long ago, you can list them within the educational section to which they are associated.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés and Business Plans

- Students should create a separate “Internship” section and list these experiences here (to make them very easy to find). Recent graduates, who have not worked in their field outside of internships, should list these within their professional experience section (in place of traditional employment). All others should only include an internship if it demonstrates a sought competency or trait.

Angela Watts, MyPro Business Services

- It depends how long you have been in the job force. If you are a current college graduate, it should be placed under Experience using the heading of Internships. They should be treated like any paying position with job titles, job descriptions, and accomplishments. After you have some professional experience, you can put them at the bottom of your Education section.

Sally McIntosh, Advantage Résumés of St. Louis

- Academically endorsed internships offer opportunities to test-drive a career. If relevant to a student’s career path, they are best placed in Professional Experience articulating accomplishments and value-added skills (keywords) the student learned as an intern. It’s best to present the internship with a job title. Instead of just “intern,” try Audit Accountant Intern.

Cheryl Minnick, University of Montana

- When deciding where to place information on your résumé, imagine an inverted triangle. Start with the most relevant information, followed by important details, and ending with general/background information. If your internship is recent and equipped you with relevant skills and experience that align with your target job, then place at or near the top of your experience section.

Norine Dagliano, ekm inspirations



If there are multiple different career directions I could take, do I really need to make a new résumé for each job?



Answers from our Experts:

- Yes, you must customize your résumé for each position to which you apply. The competition is fierce; hundreds of people could apply to the position. To stand out, your résumé must contain the appropriate key words indicating you have the skills and accomplishments—screaming “I’m the one you want!”

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted,LLC

- The strongest résumés communicate how your knowledge, skills, and experience can solve an employer's problems. If you're applying for jobs that require similar skills or have overlapping experience, knowledge, and personality traits, you usually don't have to change much. Put the focus where it belongs by re-weighting skills and experience that align with each career direction.

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- Create a résumé targeted to each career field. Think about this: if you want to hire a roofer, would you want the "handy-man" who dabbles in roofing/carpentry/plumbing/HVAC? Or would you pay top dollar for the expert roofer who specializes in shingles and gutters? Your résumé should be specific to the job function and incorporate relevant keywords based on the skills required.

Melanie Denny, Résumé Evolution

- Your résumé MUST be targeted to the role you want. It must be rich in relevant keywords to facilitate high scores in online applicant tracking software (ATS) systems or you will fail to get interviews you might otherwise deserve. Once you clear ATS, your qualifications must also resonate with human readers. If you don't capture their attention in a few seconds, you will not make the interview cut.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- Yes, but not the entire résumé. The headline and summary section need the most revision. Develop a summary for each direction that includes transferable skills and keywords. With experience, swap out accomplishment statements that are most relevant for each direction. Create a template for each direction so you can easily swap out keywords from the job posting to further customize.

Kathy Keshenberg, A Career Advantage

- Yes! Always. Having one résumé is easy, but it can end up painting you as a "generalist" or "a confused job seeker." The world has enough generalists. Employers are looking for candidates who are specialists in the role they are looking to fill. You will stand out if you demonstrate your knowledge regarding the industry, software and systems, and standard operations. A targeted résumé is key!

Chelsea Wiltse, Seasoned and Growing, LLC

- Yes, you do. Developing a résumé where your skills and accomplishments meet the position requirements is critical to make you a competitive candidate. Keyword screening is used by the majority of companies today to weed out candidates whose skills don't align with the company's needs. Having one résumé geared to multiple careers will present you as a "Jack of all trades, master of none."

Deirdre Rock, Composed Career, LLC

- Examine your professional brand. Pursuing different career directions could mean a different job in the industry you're already in, or it could mean a similar job in a different industry. These are two distinct searches. Each requires a different strategy and a targeted résumé.

Don't hesitate to seek guidance from a certified résumé writer/career coach to help you define a realistic path forward.

Cheryl Milmoë, Cardinal Expert Résumés



Is it a good idea to include information about personal interests and hobbies on my résumé?



Answers from our Experts:

- I've usually omitted personal interests and hobbies unless they directly relate to the candidate's career. Then I became aware of research showing that inclusion of elite hobbies, like polo and sailing, increased the likelihood of men getting interviews. However, if a candidate has a long list of accomplishments, I wouldn't omit one to make room for hobbies; I might include them on LinkedIn.

Kelly Donovan, Kelly Donovan & Associates

- Your résumé should contain information that provides value. There are two common scenarios where I find interests and hobbies can benefit a client: (1) if the personal interests and hobbies demonstrate a target role-desired attribute (e.g., dedication, creativity, community-focus) or (2) they help humanize a client who needs to show more personality in their résumé.

Angela Watts, MyPro Business Services

- There are limited times when adding interests makes sense because most fall in the "why do they care?" category. Applying for a Sales Manager role with a manufacturing company and listing "kayaking" on your résumé is irrelevant and takes up valuable real estate. There are times when your interests could make a difference—for example, if the aforementioned company manufactures kayaks!

Paula Christensen, Strategic Career Coaches

- In some instances it is useful to include interests, e.g., if you love golf and are in sales or business management, deals are made on golf courses; involvement in competitive sports or running marathons will demonstrate fitness and team work. Rule of thumb: if the activity directly relates to a quality needed in the role you are seeking, the answer is yes. Hobbies are generally not included.

Kathy Keshemberg, A Career Advantage

- It's a good idea to include things you're passionate about on your résumé, particularly interests or hobbies that connect to your value proposition. Don't create a separate heading—that often confuses applicant tracking systems. Best bet placements? Under Community Activities with bulleted accomplishments or as a 1- or 2-sentence blurb in the Professional Summary. Remember, tie it to your value!

Christine Lewis, Professional Designs Résumés

- My experience is that if the personal interests and hobbies are in any way related to your pursuit, include them, especially if you have assumed a leadership role. A comprehensive list is not necessary but a list that reflects variety shows balance in you too. Some leadership, social, philanthropy/volunteer, active/sports are a great array and a nice way to connect to your interviewers too!

Sharon Glennon

- As you generally don't know the personal interests, hobbies, and inclinations of a reader, it's generally best to exclude them and include only the facts that pertain to the role you want. However, if the interests align with the mission of a specific company or you know the reader enjoys the same interests, then consider customizing the résumé to include them.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted LLC

- A simple list of weekend hobbies, like running, art, and volunteering, won't land you a job. But demonstrating your personal achievements might! Did you place first in your age category at a major half marathon? Were you commissioned to paint a mural on the side of a nearby school? Raise \$12,000 for a nonprofit? These can differentiate you from other candidates and help show your personal brand.

Liz Helton

- It depends. If it is a conservative industry, probably not. Unless it is a role that depends on networking and you have a golf hobby. If you are applying to an outdoor activity-focused company, it could help to show your outdoor activity interests. Be careful of displaying interests that can disclose health conditions or religious affiliations to avoid unconscious bias in hiring decisions.

Lisa Rangel, Chameleon Résumés

- If your hobby is related to your career goal, even an indirect correlation, it could be worth including. Hobbies can also strengthen your résumés by demonstrating community involvement. Focus on your leadership and volunteer experience and your hobby is secondary. Hobbies that are polarizing—such as religion and politics—should generally be avoided.

Anne Barnwell

- Résumé real estate is normally too valuable for hobbies and interests to own any space there. Such information is rarely relevant, and even if it is, it would be the first thing edited off a crowded document. If, however, you have an unusual hobby or an interest that highlights characteristics important to your profession, it could differentiate you and become an interview conversation starter.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé and Writing Service

- Hobbies/interests add little value to your résumé, especially if you're an experienced candidate. Don't include this information unless an employer asks for it. Any hobbies/interests you list should reflect positively on you and reveal in-demand skills and qualities. Researching the company will give you an idea of its culture, and whether or not it values or de-emphasizes hobbies/interest.

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- A good practice to follow when deciding what to include on your résumé is to ask yourself the following questions: (1) Is the information relevant?; (2) Does it add value? If your personal interests and hobbies support your job target and the overall theme of your résumé (and you have the room to include them), feel free to do so.

Norine Dagliano, ekm Inspirations

- Hobbies or interests that are unimpressive, like walking on the beach, reading mystery novels, or exercising do not belong on your résumé. On the other hand, creating an Activities & Interests section on your résumé that includes impressive entries like Amateur Aviation, Blog Writing, Video Production, Running Marathons, or Teaching Yoga will create a favorable impression to prospective employers.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés and Business Plans

- It may be a good idea to include personal interests and hobbies if they are directly related to the role at hand. They could demonstrate your passion for the industry, highlight a key differentiating factor, or spark an interesting conversation. Be selective and careful not to include anything that may disqualify you based on bias or distract from your ability to perform the job well.

Melanie Denny, Résumé Evolutions

- Only if it is relevant to your job goal. If you volunteer as a golf teacher and you want to work full time as a golf instructor, that is directly related and should be on your résumé. If you are a heavy metal music enthusiast and your job goal is to be a banker, I would not include that on my résumé.

Elaine Doremus, Résumés Written



I realize résumés have changed over time; is there a new way of writing résumés in 2019 and beyond?



Answers from our Experts:

- Attention spans are getting shorter every day, so it's essential that your résumé cater to short attention spans. That doesn't necessarily mean you should cram a 20-year career onto a one-page résumé, but it does mean that your writing must be concise and your formatting must make it inviting and reader-friendly. Short paragraphs, bullets, and simple but modern design elements work well.

Kelly Donovan, Kelly Donovan & Associates

- Résumé best practices are continually evolving, and it can be challenging to keep up (even for those who work in this field). Partnering with a professional résumé writer is your best chance to keep pace with career market trends. For 2019, a résumé should be concise, limited to your most recent and relevant roles, ATS-friendly, visually appealing (formatting, design), and aligned to targeted roles.

Angela Watts, MyPro Business Services, LLC

- Yes! Attention spans are shorter than ever, so you'll need to make your point fast. Your profile summary is now more concise and can be topped with a branding statement, such as "COO Delivering Turnarounds in PE-Backed Environments." Add a chart that represents measurable career wins, particularly if you're in an innovative field. Use color to help achievements or notable job titles stand out.

Laura Smith-Proulx, An Expert Résumé

- Résumés have become focused more on your personal brand rather than just being a laundry list of your roles, skills, and job titles. Today, employers are also looking at you from a digital perspective, so your résumé and LinkedIn profile need to hinge on having a unified brand marketing piece. The structure of a résumé today is also focused on results and achievements rather than job functions.

Wendi Weiner, The Writing Guru

- The most common mistake that dates a résumé is having an objective statement. Instead of describing what YOU want, discern how you are the solution to a company's problem. It's not about you; it's about them! Replace your objective with a branding statement showcasing how your unique abilities and attributes can add value and deliver results for a company.

Meg Applegate, Hinge Résumé Collective

- Résumés need to be written with the three assumptions: (1) Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) rank résumés based on key word matches, (2) recruiters look at résumés based on the highest rankings and (3) recruiters and hiring managers don't read résumés, they scan for what they want to see. Therefore, brand yourself in the first half of your résumé's first page with words and phrases that stand out.

Julia Holian, Julia Holian & Associates

- I have seen résumés change since I started writing them in 2001 to tighter writing focused on the skills listed in job announcements. However, throughout that time, one thing has never changed, which is focusing on your accomplishments and what you have to offer the hiring manager or company. You need to find out what the hiring manager wants and follow their rules to successfully get the job.

Robin Schlinger, Robin's Résumés

- Think of the new résumé as an achievement-based snapshot of your career. Recruiters are short on time, so dive into results right away using bulleted, action statements that show your value to a company. Quantify your experience when possible and use bold or color to highlight key accomplishments. Avoid long descriptions and focus on the last ten years of work. Simplicity and relevancy are key!

Rashauna Arnold, BrandYou Career Coaching, LLC

- Yes! Consider differentiating from other candidates and elevating your document by adding color, charts/graphs, and other graphic elements. Be forward-thinking, emphasizing how you can help the employer solve their problems. Personal branding and keywords are vital components of modern résumés. Your résumé should be keyword optimized to pass through a company's applicant tracking software.

Paula Christensen, Strategic Career Coaches

- Yes, and less is more! Hiring managers and recruiters are reading résumés on their phones while commuting or over lunch. They can build a talent pool with a keyword search before they get to the office. Once they have their candidates, it's the résumés with crisp, clear, concise accomplishment statements that separate them from their competition. All that's left is the email to set up the interview.

Cheryl Milmoie, Cardinal Expert Résumés



How do I overcome being perceived as "overqualified" for a job I'm applying for?



Answers from our Experts:

- If you have sought higher level jobs without success, instead of losing thousands of dollars in salary, seek out a résumé writer/career coach to help you get the higher-level job. If you want the lower-level job, focus on your skills and accomplishments at that job level. Explain why you want that job in your résumé/cover letter, and network to the job.

Robin Schlinger, Robin's Résumés

- Tailor your résumé to your job target. Include qualifications that match the job requirements and leave off duties/responsibilities that are beyond the scope of the work you would be doing. In your summary section, make clear the position you are seeking and explain that you are looking to transition to a new career. Use your cover letter to give additional details that support your candidacy.

Paula Christensen, Strategic Career Coaches

- Tone down your over qualifications and simplify your résumé. Utilize the key words you are proficient in for each job you apply to, edit your résumé to fit that position's key words.

Gayle Keefer, TruMark Résumés

- It is appropriate to list the qualifications you have for the position sought but not all qualifications as an advanced degree or other education and/or experience may make you appear as overqualified. The guiding principle is to list relevant experience for the position sought. Stop there! If you believe qualifications above those being requested need to be included, state why.

Cliff Eischen, Eischen Professional Résumé Service

- If you're repeatedly considered as overqualified for positions, you're probably not maximizing your potential. Stretch your capabilities by applying for positions just outside of your comfort zone. Apply the 80/20 rule to your job search. Pass on roles where you meet 100% of the requirements and target opportunities that offer some room to grow (80% match with a 20% learning curve).

Ashley Watkins, Write Step Résumés, LLC

- Smart employers realize that overqualified candidates can bring a lot of value to their companies—they typically require less training and supervision. They generate a greater return on investment by bringing new ideas and proven experience to the team. Address the issue upfront in your cover letter by turning over-qualification into an asset; explain concisely why the position will be a good fit.

Donna Tucker, CareerPRO Résumé Center



What do I need to know about keywords in my résumé?



Answers from our Experts:

- Keywords are specific skills, qualifications, and job duties listed in a job announcement. For example, a bachelor's degree, five years of supervisory experience, and contract negotiation may be emphasized in the job announcement. Your résumé should mirror the language used in the announcement and fully demonstrate competency levels with each requirement, to appear as the best candidate.

Tiffany Sappington

- The best place to find keywords is in the job description. Print out the job description and highlight all the hard skills, qualifications, technical areas, and education that match your expertise and background. Then go to your résumé and do a search of how many of those words are present. Try to add them into your summary paragraph, area of expertise, and the bullets throughout your résumé.

Madelyn Mackie, Activate Your Career Dreams

- Keywords are the terms and phrases that are directly related to your job function. It's essential to have the right keywords sprinkled throughout your résumé so applicant tracking systems are able to match your skills to the job. For instance, if you're looking to apply for accounting jobs, some example keywords would be accounting, GAAP, tax, CPA, bookkeeping, financial accounting.

Melanie Denny, Résumé Evolution

- Keywords are the concepts that define what your content is about. Websites use keywords to drive traffic to their business. Like websites, résumés need keywords to bypass ATS and reach the hiring manager. It's critical that you read the job description's selection criteria carefully. Which words are repeated? What are the requirements (i.e., education, certifications, industry skills, etc.)?

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- Keeping it simple, keywords are the words that a hiring manager or decision maker will use to search and vet candidates. More often than not these keywords are hard versus soft skills (think "project management" or "supply chain management" versus "multitasker"). The best place to search for keywords is in the qualifications section of a job description.

Virginia Franco, NCRW, Virginia Franco Résumés

- Keywords are words in the job description that describe specific skills, abilities, credentials and qualities that employers seek to meet their hiring needs. Review the job description and identify the keywords the employer is seeking. Weave the keywords you possess throughout your résumé to show you are a match for the position. The stronger the match, the more likely you will be contacted.

Robert Rosales, EZ Résumé Services

- Here is a simple 4-step formula... (1) Gather a few job announcements for positions that you are most eagerly targeting. (2) Carefully review the sections for qualifications, requirements, and job descriptions. (3) Use a highlighter pen to call out the nouns that jump off the page, staying away from adjectives or verbs. These nouns could be systems, programs, departments, or technologies. (4) Insert!

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés & Business Plans

- Keywords are the words and phrases indicative of important qualifications and job functions in a job posting. This will give you a clue about what is essential to the position and valued by the company. Include those qualifications and responsibilities that are listed first and repeated throughout. Mirror the language in the job posting within your accomplishments on your résumé.

Meg Applegate, Hinge Résumé Collective

- Keywords (or words employers will be looking for on your résumé) are found in each job posting. Each company has provided you with their language, but which words do you use? (1) Lean on your expertise and what you know is important about the work (2) Look at the things employers repeat within the job posting, and (3) consider the "required" and "preferred" skills as your must-use keywords.

Brenda Cunningham, Push Career Management, LLC

- Keywords are words that are picked up when your résumé is scanned electronically. They are words that are the most commonly used in a job in your field. See Susan Britton Whitcomb's book *Résumé Magic* (Second Edition Pages 45, 169-177, 208) for crucial information on this topic.

Elaine Doremus, RésumésWritten.net

- You can often find keywords for a particular position by scanning a position announcement or reviewing a job description e.g. in the Occupational Outlook Handbook (Department of Labor). Applicant Tracking Software performs the initial screening of your résumé and scores it based on the prevalence of keywords used in context. This automated step helps employers weed out unqualified candidates.

Alexia Scott, A Winning Résumé, LLC

- Keywords are words and phrases that indicate skill, knowledge, and experience. Job postings are filled with keywords indicating what the employer wants. Keywords are important to job seekers because by properly customizing your résumé to include the desired keywords, you say, "I've got the skills you are looking for!" You include all keywords that match your skills and are wanted by the employer.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- Keywords are used by recruiters to identify candidates who fit the job description (skills, and qualifications) for the positions they are hiring. In the day of Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) systems, keywords are used to help recruiters choose qualified candidates from their batch of résumés to review. The more keywords, the better the chance of catching the eye of the recruiter.

Lisa Hebert, LMH Advisors, LLC

- Keywords are the specific skills/knowledge/expertise needed to qualify for a particular job. One way to optimize your résumé's keywords: Extract the keywords and keyword phrases from posted job descriptions and focus on them (as appropriate) in a qualifications summary and in your job descriptions.

Pat Kendall, NCRW, Advanced Résumé Concepts

- The modern résumé is not a static document. Circle key terms in each job description for which you are applying. Use those terms throughout your résumé. Taking a little time to tweak your résumé to mirror specific job description language as you apply to each job can significantly boost résumé performance.

Andrea Adamski, Write for You Résumés

- Simply put, keywords help get your résumé in front of a person. Employers use computerized applicant tracking systems (ATS) to scan résumés for keywords and match them with their job criteria. The software can sort applicants based on keyword matches and allow employers to seamlessly initiate calls with those applicants ranked highly (the best keyword matches). More keywords = more calls.

Bridget Batson, Houston Outplacement



How do I know what keywords I should include on my résumé?



Answers from our Experts:

- Believe it or not, the job descriptions for the positions of interest you find online possess the "golden nugget" keywords you're looking for to include in your résumé. For example, if you see the word "budget" or "operations" mentioned a couple times, there's a pretty good chance those words are keywords. Look for nouns that are skills. If you have those skills, you will want to include them.

Kiersten Troutman, Second Glance Résumés

- When you submit your résumé for a specific opening, your résumé should be focused and tweaked for that particular position. Go through the job announcement and carefully pick out the terms and descriptions it uses to detail the skills and technologies that are desired or required. Then weave those into your résumé. If there are items that you are unfamiliar with, research them and get up to speed.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés & Business Plans

- The answer to your keyword question lies within each job advertisement you apply to. Using the free version of keyword scanning software, like that available at <https://jobscan.co>, you can scan your résumé against each job ad and get a report that tells you where you fall short. Then you can plug those words in if you can.

Mill Montejo, The Talent Mill | Job Search Superhero | Dr Mill Computer Wiz

- The first place to look for keywords is the job description—many of the answers will be located there. If you don't have a target job yet, look at others similar to what you might like. Also, look on LinkedIn at jobs of interest and check out what skills they require. Those are great keywords to help your résumé (and your LinkedIn profile) stand out to the screening software and the recruiter!

Scot Hulshizer, The Résumé Expert

- Knowing your industry is key! Each industry has its own set of what is known as "keywords." Take time to review job postings (descriptions) as well as the culture, needs, and lingo of the companies that you are targeting. Find out what type of experience they are seeking, what skills they need, and what type of expertise they are looking for. Incorporate those keywords into your résumé.

Chelsea Wiltse, Seasoned and Growing LLC

- Mine keywords from several target job posts. The stronger the match between this keyword content and that of your résumé, the higher your score in applicant tracking software (ATS). But don't stop there. Many ATS administrators build "hidden" keywords into the system to help exclude pretenders. These keywords would typically include industry jargon and other nouns specific to your line of work.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- Generally, keywords are the terms used in a job description to define skills and expectations for that position. It's always a good idea to make sure that you use the same terminology and descriptive phrases the employer is using. If you don't have a good list, research the job title. You can look at other job ads; use a site such as onetonline.org, or ask someone in that field.

Ruth Sternberg, Entrepreneurial Job Search

- The first thing you have to have is clarity. What does this mean? Are you applying to one specific position or are you applying to multiple positions that are similar? If you are applying to one position you'll want to review the job requirements thoroughly and pull key words from there. If you are applying to multiple jobs in one industry you'll use industry specific words.

Demisha Jennings, She Assists, LLC



I realize that résumés now need to include numbers. I don't do sales, so I don't have any numbers to include. Am I doomed?



Answers from our Experts:

- No! There are many ways to measure your performance, including process improvement, change management, customer satisfaction and retention, employee turnover, employee development, and problem solving, to name a few. Document examples of the ways you have made your workplace better and include statistics as best you can. Your educated “guesstimates” will be acceptable even if you don't have hard numbers.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumés & Writing Service

- We love numbers as a hiring panel!! If you facilitate meetings, how many and how often are you facilitating meetings? Answer this using numbers. No sales, no problem. Anything you do can be quantified! That is the most remarkable part of developing your résumé—being creative in showing your current potential using numbers, percentages, and rates.

Alisha Brown, Alisha D. Brown Career Consulting

- Quantifying accomplishments can include # calls received, customers aided, cost cut, time saved, staff led, events planned, guests hosted, goals reached ... you're definitely not doomed. Reflect on your accomplishments in terms of (1) what was my Challenge? (2) what Action did I take? (3) what were Results of my action (CAR)? Then, start bullets with strong action verbs to show employers your ROI.

Cheryl Minnick, University of Montana

- You're not doomed; just need to know what to look for and count! How many times did you complete any task, e.g. answer phones, service customers, sign contracts, stock shelves? How much time or dollars did you make/save for an employer? How long did it take to create/produce/finish a task or product? If you changed anything, by how much? Almost anything can be counted!

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- Anyone can list measurable achievements on their résumé. Receptionist: number of daily phone calls. Administrative Assistant: # of people supported and revenues since their support allows sales to generate revenues. Customer Service Rep: amount of time to resolve customer problems. RN: # of patients on the unit. Supervisor: # of people they manage, cost savings or time saving processes shows value.

Cherie Heid, Competitive Edge Résumé Service

- Don't despair. We can find lots of opportunities to present numbers—even if you aren't in sales. How about people-oriented numbers like customers served, people managed, performance rank? There's % of increase in productivity or quality. Maybe reductions in costs or time. Don't

know the exact number? Use a range. Then tell the story behind the numbers to paint a picture and enhance your value.

Donna Tucker, CareerPRO Résumé Center

- No, you are not doomed! Even in non-revenue generating roles, there are ways to convey the value you offer your next employer. Look for ways your efforts contributed to or supported revenue, cost reduction, or time saving activity. In lieu of numbers, you may use general phrases or percentages, e.g., supported 5-person team in securing gifts for a multimillion-dollar funding campaign.

Tammy Shoup, Breakthrough Résumé Writing Service

- No, you are not doomed! Numbers aren't just for sales; they can be anything from the number of staff supervised, how much money/time saved, number of projects completed, etc. Estimate if needed. Aim to quantify 70% of your bullet points if possible, but if you don't have that many numbers you can still show results with wording like, increased efficiencies, saved time, reduced costs, etc.

Holly Leyva, Virtual Vocations, Inc.



I had to take time off work for a year to support a close family member with health issues: Should I mention this on my résumé to explain the gap in employment?



Answers from our Experts:

- If you have an employment gap of 6+ months, address it so that the employer is not filling in the gaps with their own ideas of what you may have been up to during that time. It all comes down to positioning. Briefly mention the gap, but keep the focus on any career-related training and professional development that you undertook to show your commitment to staying relevant within your industry.

Kate Williamson, Sciencetech Résumés

- Yes. Gaps in employment make hiring authorities suspicious. Include your care giving role in the appropriate chronological space of the experience section of your document, and format it in the same way as your regular employment. In place of employer name, use something like "Sabbatical" or "Family Service" and use "Caregiver" as your job title.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- Definitely show time spent as a Care Giver to eliminate an employment gap. Author the experience you gained to include health engineering, domestic engineering, insurance consulting, scheduling, transportation, and communication management across engaged stakeholders. There's much experience you have gained while supporting a family member. Rehearse presenting that info prior to the interview.

Michele (MCann) Kelley, CareerPro, Inc.

- Yes, your FMLA leave needs to be reflected on your résumé. Many Americans find themselves in similar situations each year so you're not alone. Did you acquire some new skills during your leave as part of the care you provided? Maybe you took some online courses to stay current on industry trends or your job specifically. All of these demonstrate initiative and should be duly noted on your résumé.

Cheryl Milmoë, Cardinal Expert Résumés

- Yes, mention it. Employers don't like employment gaps. They value how you were working. "What" you worked isn't as important as you might fear. And guess what?—taking care of family is valued by many employers! I've met people who drove taxis, worked retail, and, yes, took care of family members. They all eventually obtained the position they wanted.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- Yes, based on my experience in similar situations. It's a LOT of (important) work that you deserve credit for. I'm assuming you not only provided care, but coordinated with nurses, therapists, doctors, aides; insurance claims. Did you oversee/administer medication? Did you create procedures, charts, patient routines, or checklists? Pay bills? All of this counts and accounts for your time.

Camille Roberts, CC Career Services

- Yes, you should mention this in your résumé. The way I handle this for my clients is to list it as a personal care giving sabbatical. Align the overview of duties as closely to what you normally do in your career as possible (for example, if you are a financial professional, emphasize any financial management tasks you did for your family member).

Melissa Kelley, Kelley Résumés & Wordsmithing

- Yes, most definitely! If you have a break from your professional employment history due to a major life circumstance, treat it just like a chronological job entry on your résumé. Examples might be family or child care, pursuing education, or pitching in on a family business that's in trouble. Even travel can be accounted for in this way if the trip was unique enough. List the "to" and "from" dates.

Phil Hurd, Catalyst Résumés, LLC

- The first step is—to be honest. Never put the recruiter in the position to second guess career gaps particularly if the gap amounts to more than six months. If the recruiter is left guessing this could conjure a "red flag" and prevent you from getting to the next stage. You do not need to add all the details, but you should try to professionally summarize why you have this gap.

Louise Duffield, Gated Talent



I notice there are so many formats and designs when it comes to résumés. Is it better to keep the visual aspect of the résumé simple, or fill it with colors that could overwhelm the reader?

A

Answers from our Experts:

- By all means, add a dash of color. As long as you incorporate elements of good design, your résumé will look good and differentiate it from all the other plain ones. The key, as you wrote, is to not overdo it.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- These two factors may alter the advice to keep your résumé within a conservative, graphics-free style: (1) Vocation – interior decorators, entertainers, artists, designers, and other creative fields often prepare colorful, graphics-laden résumés. (2) Location – Hiring officials in larger metropolitan markets like San Francisco, New York, London, etc. are more open to edgier, colorful résumé formats.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés and Business Plans

- Color, format, and design can add interest to your résumé, but don't lose sight of the fact that your résumé is about you. The strategy and presentation of your experience and accomplishments—quantifiable if possible—is more important than style. A Nationally Certified Résumé Writer is trained to create compelling résumés that are both visually appealing and will score well on ATS scans.

Jean Austin, Talents Presented Résumé Writing and Job Search Strategies

- Before reading a single word of your résumé, the reader will notice the visual cues and form a first impression of you. Since many résumés are viewed on screen, adding color or visuals can add punch and help you stand out from the traditional black-and-white-with-Times-New-Roman-font look. In the end, content is king. Would color and visuals be considered on brand for your industry or profession?

Kate Williamson, Sciencetech Résumés

- Although a splash of color will help make your résumé stand out, content is still king. A simple, clean design with a pop of color for your headings or subheadings, along with plenty of white space, will make your résumé stand out without overwhelming the reader. Using a bit of color will break up sections and give your document a more modern look but proceed with caution.

Tammy Shoup, Breakthrough Résumé Writing Service

- Content is king, but aesthetics are important. Strive for a nice balance of creative design and content. Résumés are typically boring and adding some visual spunk helps capture the reader's attention. It's OK to use color, shapes and graphics to emphasize compelling information. The words on the page should always be the focal point and the imagery should simply complement what's written.

Melanie Denny, Résumé Evolution

- Nearly everyone must have a résumé that is compatible with applicant tracking software (ATS) systems. Graphics, charts, and photos can add interest, but they will be lost in ATS systems. Furthermore, overuse of design elements can repel a fast-moving human reader. Unless you

are working with a professional writer who knows how to strategically deploy such content, it's best to use a simple design.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- A clean/modern appearance is important, but with 200+ ATSs (Applicant Tracking Software) on the market, a standard format is safest. Use standard section headings: Summary, Career Experience, and Education. Avoid columns altogether; use tables in individual sections of a résumé. Adding an accent color, bolding, and shading is just enough. Text boxes and images/graphs will not get read by the ATS.

Thomas Powner, Career Thinker, Inc.



I've seen résumés that include charts, bar graphs, word clouds, and other graphic images. Is this the new norm?



Answers from our Experts:

- Content remains king. It will always serve you well to present well-matched qualifications and achievement-oriented writing in a clean, easy-to-navigate format. Fancy design elements won't survive online applicant tracking software (ATS) systems anyway, and simple design techniques can highlight critical data in ways that will survive both ATS and the initial 10-second review by humans.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- These items are referred to as "infographics," and they can be advantageous in today's rapid screening environment. Their benefits include increased reader appeal, comprehension, and retention. Ambiguous infographics or too many visual elements can have the opposite effect and distract human screeners from résumé content. Quality infographics are limited and clearly related to key accomplishments.

Angela Watts, MyPro Résumés

- Résumés with graphics, such as charts, can help immediately capture more attention to your strengths. Pictures speak louder than words! These images are valuable for distinguishing yourself against intensive competition, particularly when you are presenting the résumé directly to a hiring authority. Of course, some graphic elements may need adjustments in order to pass résumé screening systems.

Laura Smith-Proulx, An Expert Résumé

- Employing graphs can be an effective way to create a visually impactful résumé. However, such design features must be Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) compatible. Relying on graphs to convey key quantifiable data could result in it being ignored by ATS, inadvertently omitting your bottom-line impact. If in doubt, consider attaching infographic data to your LinkedIn profile for complementary info.

Deirdre Rock, Composed Career, LLC

- Résumés have evolved significantly. Graphics can be used effectively to showcase content that will resonate with the human reader and create strong visual appeal—if applied appropriately. However, applying graphics requires skill and expertise, or they can do more harm than good. I suggest you keep it simple and, instead, focus on writing content that conveys your value.

Robert Rosales, EZ Résumé Services

- Charts, graphics, and text boxes are effective eye-catchers for résumés so long as they interest the reader and enhance the readability of the résumé, e.g., a chart showing how you increased sales or a text box with a testimonial could really impress the hiring manager. This won't become the norm, as many people hesitate to include such objects because of ATS-rejection fears.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted LLC

- Yes, it will add visual appeal and communicate unique skill sets and value proposition you offer. The ATS scannable (unformatted) version is still needed and depending on employer process for submitting résumés, you should have a visual résumé (in Word and PDF), and ATS version that captures keywords for targeted job. If sending via an email, you can always send both visual and ATS versions.

Margo Flores, Writing With A Flair, LLC

- Having a more visually appealing résumé will help you stand out from the crowd. Using graphic images can break up the text-rich résumé and give the human reader a quick way to see your accomplishments. But they aren't typically readable by Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) systems. That means any information contained in the chart or graphic is lost. Make sure that data is included some other way.

Lisa Hebert, LMH Advisors, Inc.

- It is certainly true that you can't compete with a layout of your father's résumé anymore, and I would advise you to include some of those elements in your résumé to stay competitive in 2020. However, the "norm" and scope of graphical enhancements that will be helpful in optimizing your résumé will largely depend on your specific industry and career level.

Tim Windhof, Windhof Communications - Career Services



How long should my résumé be?



Answers from our Experts:

- The length of your résumé is determined by two main factors: (1) the value that you bring to the table and need to communicate and (2) the attention span and digestibility on the receiving end. This will "translate", in most cases, to a résumé length between one and three pages. A one pager will typically be too short for most senior and executive roles.

Tim Windhof, Windhof Communications – Career Services

- Résumé length should be dictated by content, not by outdated rules or preconceived ideas about what a résumé “should” be. One page often works well for recent grads with little work experience, while two-page résumés are typical for experienced professionals. However, there are always exceptions! Be concise, but not at the expense of powerful content that distinguishes you from other candidates.

Jennifer Fishberg, Career Karma Résumé Development & Career Services

- The “no-more-than-one-page” rule is a myth, although a single-page document might be the ideal length for a new grad. Typically, résumés are two pages for mid-level professionals and two+ pages for executives. There are exceptions for those in scientific and academic fields, so consult a professional résumé writer to be sure your résumé is the correct length and structure for your targeted position.

Jean Austin, Talents Presented Résumé Writing & Job Search Strategies

- If you are out of school less than five years, the general rule is to keep it to one page. Beyond that, two pages isn’t a problem, and for very senior people, it may extend beyond that. What is most important is ultimately not the length but presenting your personal brand, skills, professional experience and relevant education, certifications, publications and professional affiliations.

Artie Fertig, Jobhuntercoach

- Résumé length depends on your experience. A new college grad probably will present a one-page résumé, while someone with more positions will have enough relevant information to fill two pages. The key is to highlight your contributions—what projects did you work on or actions did you initiate that had a positive impact on the company or delivered quantifiable results?

Kathy Keshemberg, A Career Advantage

- There’s no rule that a résumé must be one page, especially for a job seeker with significant experience. A résumé is a marketing tool. As such, it should be long enough to effectively convey your accomplishments and the value you can offer an employer, without reading like a novel or containing too much “fluff.” Most résumés are 1-3 pages, but that does not mean a great résumé can’t be longer.

Kelli Long, KG Workforce Solutions

- I hate to say it depends, but it does. If you have more than 10 years of experience, a two-page résumé is not unwarranted. Less than 10, you should strive for one page. If using a two-page résumé, be sure the first page contains the most relevant and impactful content. While systems that scan résumés today will read all content, the human reader (aka the recruiter) more than likely will not.

Lisa Hebert, LMH Workforce Solutions

- Your résumé should be as long as necessary to effectively portray your qualifications and experience. It’s as simple as that! If this can be accomplished in one page, you are probably not an executive or senior manager! If it takes two, that’s fine. And if you are at a very senior level or are in a highly technical/scientific field, academia or medicine, three or even four pages may be warranted.

Laurie Smith, Creative Keystrokes Executive Résumé Service

- Most employers prefer a two-page résumé if you have numerous years of experience so they can get a summary of your job duties and a list of your accomplishments in each position. However, if you have less than five years experience, it may be best to have a one-page résumé. You want your résumé to be readable, so the best size font for most résumés is point size 11 or 12.

Cheri Heid, Competitive Edge Résumé Service

- The length of your résumé depends on your experience and how long you have been working. Usually, two strategically written pages can tell the reader what they want to know: who you are, what you do and why you are the best candidate for the position. For C-Level executives it could take three pages to tell a compelling narrative of the success that was achieved because of their leadership.

Cheryl Milmoie, Cardinal Expert Résumés

- College grad résumés should be one page, middle managers two pages. Executives with strong and lengthy career histories might go for a three-page résumé provided they are in an industry that favors experience over having a more recent skill set (CFO favors experience, Digital Marketing Director favors a more recent skill set).

Rebecca Bosl, Dream Life Team

Chapter Two

COVER LETTERS

Yes, You Still Need One!

The cover letter, like your résumé, is an important marketing tool. This formal business letter not only communicates your interest in the position at hand but also bridges the information on your résumé with the specific needs of the prospective employer.



I read a few articles online that mentioned cover letters being dead. Is this true?



Answers from our Experts:

- Definitely not dead. Include a cover letter whenever allowed. First, the cover letter allows you to expand on your résumé and highlight your personal brand. It's your opportunity to truly differentiate yourself from other applicants. A hiring manager recently told me, "I may or may not read the cover letters, but I first examine the applications that include a cover letter."

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- Mark Twain once quipped, "Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." The same is true here. For starters, many job announcements request a cover letter, and those hiring directors will expect one. As a business owner who has hired staff for many years, I can assure you that a brief, specifically targeted cover letter that accompanies a résumé, sets it apart and gives it a competitive edge.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés & Business Plans

- It depends on the industry and the requirements listed in the job vacancy announcement itself. Cover letters are becoming more obsolete, but there is still a good chance for one to be submitted. I recommend keeping one on hand that can be tailored for a specific position at all times. It is good to be prepared in all circumstances.

Alisha Brown, Alisha D. Brown Career Consulting

- It all comes down to your application approach. If you are limiting yourself to a passive job search campaign, i.e., applying to open job market opportunities online, then there will be application scenarios where a cover letter is no longer requested. However, if you are also

tapping into the hidden job market, you will still need a cover letter in which you elaborate your reason for reaching out.

Tim Windhof, Windhof Communications – Career Services

- A candidate with a strong, effective, creative covering letter may just gain an advantage over another. A real strength of a covering letter, for example, could be stating a string of projects you have managed (even though you are not a project manager by job title). This could help strengthen your position if you are looking for that next career step, something you cannot do in a résumé.

Louise Duffield, Gated Talent

- No! Your cover letter may not be the first thing read, and with a stellar résumé, it may not be read at all. Hiring authorities may look at (1) your LinkedIn profile, then, (2) your résumé, and then (3) your cover letter (and not necessarily in that order). A résumé is a presentation of facts; a cover letter is a narrative which allows you to discuss your fit for the position in greater depth.

Jean Austin, Talents Presented Résumé Writing and Job Search Strategies

- Cover letters can be an asset in your application materials. One way is to address your letter to an actual person. While a bot will typically be sifting through your career documents first, a PERSON will be hiring you. Ditch “Whom It May Concern” or “Attention: Hiring Manager.” Do your research and address the letter to who will be reading it. Search the company website or sleuth on LinkedIn.

Meg Applegate, Hinge Résumé Collective

- A 2017 Job Seeker Nation Survey revealed that 26% of recruiters read cover letters and consider them important in the hiring decision. A separate study disclosed that 56% of employers prefer applicants to submit a cover letter with their résumé. Since you have no way of knowing if your cover letter will be seen by a person who does/doesn't read them, it's in your best interest to submit one.

Kate Williamson, Sciencetech Résumés

- Cover letters tie directly to the résumé but have a different job. Résumés tell if the candidate has the right skills and the right experience. The cover letter opens the window for readers to see the human side of the candidate. Soft skills are in high demand now. It's too costly for companies to make a hiring mistake. Use the cover letter to show why you're the perfect fit for the position.

Cheryl Milmoie, Cardinal Expert Résumés

- The simple answer is no. Cover letters are not dead; however, when applying for positions, read the job description. If it says no cover letters, don't submit one. If it's optional, take advantage of the opportunity to provide your differentiated and unique value statement. It may not be read, but if you don't submit one, it can't be read. Just be sure that when you do submit one, it is stellar.

Lisa Hebert, LMH Advisors, Inc.



Should I include salary info in my cover letter?



Answers from our Experts:

- Your cover letter should be designed to secure the interview, while determining how much a position might pay is best done through other avenues. In cases where the announcement specifically asks for your salary requirements, do research via Glassdoor.com, Salary.com, LinkedIn, or Google to arrive at a rough estimate. Then offer a range that spans from 15% below to 15% above the estimated figure.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés & Business Plans

- In general and for private sector positions, there is no benefit to including your salary in your cover letter. However, it is important to follow the company's application process. If a job posting requests salary to be included in your cover letter, I would include it unless you live in a state that prohibits employers from asking about current salary.

Kelli Long, KG Workforce Solutions

- If the job announcement asks for desired salary, I recommend providing either a range (\$42,000-48,000) or indicate "negotiable." You may include this information in a cover letter or within the application itself, depending on instructions provided in the job announcement. If the job announcement does not explicitly request desired salary, I recommend you do not address it.

Tiffany Sappington

- If the job posting asks for a desired salary or history, then share it, but don't lock yourself into a hard number; provide a range, e.g., \$125K-\$150K. You should think in total compensation: base salary \$125K-\$150K + Y/E bonus, 401(k) w/match and healthcare/wellness benefits. Otherwise, I advise not including salary unless you are strategically looking for a certain salary.

Tom Powner, Career Thinker, LLC

- If a job doesn't require you to include salary information, don't include it. If your target salary is too high, the employer may not consider you. Too low? You may be offered less than what you're worth. When asked to provide this information, include a realistic salary range based on research for the job in your area. This will provide you and the employer with room to negotiate.

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- You should only include salary information if the employer specifically requests it. Otherwise, don't mention salary in your cover letter since it can be used to filter you out before you get an interview. However, if the employer does request salary information, use a salary range or indicate that salary is negotiable based upon the position and overall compensation package.

Robert Rosales, EZ Résumé Services

- My advice is to not include that information in the cover letter, especially if you are not asked to include the information. It would be best if you learned about the position and company before you talk numbers. If requested, do your research and be sure you are asking for market value, not necessarily basing it on what you make today.

Lisa Hebert, LMH Advisors, LLC



How can I make sure my cover letter is interesting enough to capture the attention of a recruiter or hiring manager?



Answers from our Experts:

- Write for the audience (typically an HR professional and the hiring manager). Use familiar language (pulled from their website or the posting) and a voice that aligns with their company culture (e.g., don't be formal if they are casual and progressive). Include accomplishment statements that demonstrate your unique value and align with the duties and goals of their position.

Angela Watts, MyPro Business Services, LLC

- A captivating cover letter must do 3 things: (1) make a connection with the reader (2) briefly address the employer's needs and how your skills and experiences can meet those needs. Share relevant highlights from your work history or academics to back up your claims and (3) inspire the reader to take action ... aka call you for an interview! Be memorable and follow up after you apply.

Kate Williamson, Sciencetech Résumés

- Decisions about which candidate to hire are often resolved because of a great cover letter. Recruiters and hiring managers already know an applicant's skill and experience from their résumé. What they can't see is the human side of the candidate. A clever, well-written cover letter, one that shows personality or even a sense of humor appropriately expressed, can win the day!

Cheryl Milmoie, Cardinal Expert Résumés

- Employers are interested in knowing what you can do for them. Try to avoid writing a cover letter that plays to your needs and wants. Instead, focus on identifying what you know about them, why you are applying to them, and perhaps a specific example or two on how you've met some of their needs in previous experiences. In a nutshell, focus on them and how you would be an asset to their mission.

Kiersten Troutman, Second Glance Résumés

- If you follow the standard advice to use three standard (and boring) paragraphs, your letter won't interest anyone. Be different. Start with "why." Open up. Reveal your passion. Tell the employer why you love what you do and what led you to apply for the job. Don't regurgitate your résumé; expand on it. Passion plus accomplishments will catch their attention.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- A cover letter should explain why you want to work at a place of employment and why you're qualified. It should be brief with very short paragraphs; make use of bullets. Beyond this, you can make a cover letter interesting by showing your personality. Use storytelling techniques to creatively explain why you're the best person for the job.

Rebecca Bosi, Dream Life Team

- Cover letters represent your opportunity to display the research you have done on the intended company and position. Additional research may reveal the "pain point" or challenges that the company is experiencing within a competitive business environment. By conveying your knowledge of the company and addressing the challenges it faces, your cover letter will position you as a leading candidate.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés & Business Plans

- We write a "human voice" cover letter for our clients, which details how they can immediately address the employer's needs. We thoroughly research the candidate's background history as well as the company to learn how to align their stories. We write a brief summary about how our client is the right fit for the job naming job requirements on the left and how they will address each one on the right.

Mill Montejo, The Talent Mill | Job Search Superhero | Dr Mill Computer Wiz

- To capture the attention of a hiring manager, write a different cover letter for each job you apply for. Convey to the company that you understand their needs. Explain how the company's mission and values align with your own. Then provide examples of your accomplishments that speak as specifically as possible to the main qualifications needed for the position.

Brenda Bernstein, The Essay Expert

- Résumés are about you; cover letters should be about the company. Creating a targeted cover letter, specific to that company, outlining why you're applying and how you can make an impact, is going to get more attention than a templated cover letter.

Anne Barnwell

Chapter Three

NETWORKING

Sometimes It IS Who You Know

Networking is all about making contacts and building relationships that can lead to the job of your dreams. Whether formal or informal face-to-face networking or online through LinkedIn, for instance, networking can help you obtain leads, referrals, advice, information, and support. It is a key component of any successful job search.



I'm in the market for a new job. How can I come up with a good elevator pitch for when I'm meeting new people at networking events?



Answers from our Experts:

- Keep your elevator pitch to the point, and make sure you include the problem you will solve, the value you offer, and why you are the best person for the position/opportunity.

Rosa Vargas, Career Steering

- Know your targets and your marketable skills. Tell your listener who you are, what you do, and what distinguishes you from everyone else doing the same work. Let them know why a company would want to hire you. Share something that you can offer that your competition can't or won't. Know what makes you the perfect choice for an employer and be able to say it in two minutes or less.

Cheryl Milmoie, Cardinal Expert Résumés

- Think "simplicity and differentiation." Consider your skills and what you do differently or better than others. Then distill that to a couple of sentences that will catch the other person's attention and make them want to know more about you. Need inspiration? Look at LinkedIn profile headlines! Once you engage the person, true networking can begin.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- The best elevator pitches are brief, perhaps a sentence or two; encapsulate your transferable skills and background, emphasize your recent successes, and indicate your availability or willingness to explore options without sounding disloyal to your current employer. The pitch should be rehearsed until you can effortlessly and seamlessly weave it into a variety of conversations and scenarios.

- You should always have a 30- to 90-second polished and rehearsed overview of who you are and what you do along with what is next for you if you are in the market for a new job. Read ads for what you want to do, create an inventory of what you have done, and then write a very brief pitch to market you in a confident and clear way. Practice with others and request feedback. Tweak it as needed.

Sharon Glennon

- Think of an elevator pitch as a 15-second commercial about YOU in three parts:
 1. Who are you? Simple stuff like your name and professional work context.
 2. Your unique value. What accomplishments, skills and/or passions make you stand apart from the crowd?
 3. Call to action. Where are you going? I'm looking to use <skill> as a <position>. Above all, be authentic. Be you!

Meg Applegate, Hinge Résumé Collective



Any tips for creating an attention-grabbing LinkedIn headline?



Answers from our Experts:

- Begin with the search terms people will use to find someone who does what you do, and use all 120 characters of LinkedIn headline space available to create a branded, keyword-rich statement. Search terms usually involve job titles and key qualifications, but not company names. Add a descriptor or two to start building your brand and differentiating yourself from the competition, and voila!

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- Include keywords and titles that hiring authorities are likely to search and throw in a little personality or a noteworthy accomplishment (e.g. "Forward-thinking QSR Executive who drove McDonald's expansion up to 119 countries"). Be mindful of your field and target industry (conservative, progressive, competitive, etc.) and align your headline accordingly.

Angela Watts, MyPro Résumés

- To capture more interest, use a LinkedIn Headline that describes how you get results. "Chief Revenue Officer: I Build & Leverage Rainmakers Exceeding Sales Goals" shows how this executive develops next-generation talent for a substantial impact on growth. Include keywords, such as your target job and industry, for even more credibility and LinkedIn traffic.

Laura Smith-Proulx, An Expert Résumé

- Don't fall into the tired practice of using just your current title as a headline. This is prime real estate, as well as a high-value search area used by LI algorithms. Your headline should include

position title along with a compelling branding tag line. Define your proposition value (what is the ROI you bring to the table) and sell it. Think advertising billboard—direct and impactful.

Deirdre Rock, Composed Career, LLC

- Define what you do. Not a title, but rather a statement of value to the reader. I could put, President, CEO. Instead, my headline reads: We help corporations manage human capital strategies and senior executives find new jobs and careers. Any HR or corporate executive understands what I/my company can do for them.

Fred Coon, Stewart, Cooper, & Coon

- Think about your expertise and value-add. Let's say your job title is HR Director at ABC Corp. What does that really tell the reader about what you do/can do? A better headline would be: "HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR – Talent Management | Organizational Development | Employee Engagement | Change Management." This headline includes critical keywords and "brands" you as more than just a job title.

Carol Adams, Ideal Résumés, LLC

- Your LinkedIn headline works like an advertisement to attract and engage your target audience. It conveys who you are, what you do, and your unique value. Include a position title and industry-specific keywords that represent your skill and expertise. Add a vital certification or credential if it aligns with your goals. Choose your words strategically with a forward-focus.

Robert Rosales, EZ Résumé Services

- Stay within 120-character limit, include position title, optimize keywords, add branding statement, and ensure content matches résumé. Sample 1: Chief Executive Officer | Healthcare Operations | Board Certified in Healthcare Management | Implementation of Health System Efficiency. Sample 2: Healthcare Executive: Hospital Operation | Committed to Creating Value in Healthcare for All Stakeholders.

Margaret Flores, Writing with A Flair, LLC

- Your LinkedIn headline should speak to your targeted audience and answer the "So what" question. If you had a significant accomplishment, you could put it in the headline. If the job you're looking for calls for certain skills, say, C++ programming, you could put "C++ Programmer" there. What you don't want is to waste space with the default LinkedIn headline, "Job Title" at "Company Name."

Karen Bartell, Best-in-Class Résumés



I realize it's important to network on LinkedIn, but I'm not sure where to start. How do I go about making new connections on LinkedIn?



Answers from our Experts:

- I recommend you join groups that you are interested in and read the articles and posts made by the members of the group. Then, send them a connection request and perhaps reference one of the articles or posts to start a conversation. You can use this same strategy to comment on posts in your feed; then connect with the author. Go to company pages and see who the employees are and connect there.

Camille Roberts, CC Career Services

- Begin connecting with peers, current/former coworkers and managers, and those you know through industry-specific groups. Review email and membership rosters if you get stuck for names. Immediately connect with those you meet at business networking and social events. Search LinkedIn for people that work at companies you are interested in. Accept connect requests from those within your industry.

Cathy Lanzalaco, Inspire Careers

- It's important to participate on LinkedIn. Creating your own posts to share information, articles, etc. of interest to your connections is a great way to stay top of mind. However, jumping into the conversation by commenting on other people's posts or articles will help you "meet" people outside of your circle. Don't forget to stay in touch with the contacts you have already.

Annette Richmond, Career-intelligence Résumé Writing and Career Services

- Feeling brave? Add a LinkedIn Open Networker (LION) or two to your network. Search for "LION + recruiter + [industry / function] + [location]." LIONS want you as a connection, and you will benefit from their extensive second-degree network (now your third-degree circle). Strategically become findable quickly by people you don't know; then build your network organically with people you do know.

Amy Adler, Five Strengths Career Transition Experts

- Look for experts and peers in your field: join Groups that reflect your expertise, follow companies of interest, and follow people you admire. Comment on these company, Group, or peer updates; then issue a connection invitation stating your interest in their work. Regular engagement and visibility in these areas will help promote your own skills and make people more likely to network with you.

Laura Smith-Proulx, An Expert Résumé

- First step is to have a complete, compelling LI profile. Then you are ready to make connections. By default, LI will pull all of your contacts and offer to send connection requests. Don't do this! Choose people you know professionally—past bosses and co-workers, vendors,

and others you interacted with in each position; college alumni; community leaders and friends. Always personalize the request.

Kathy Keshenberg, A Career Advantage

- Invite friends and colleagues to connect with you. Review those suggested on your LinkedIn profile—people you may have worked with; school alumni you may know; people you may know—and invite them to connect. Add your LinkedIn URL to your email signature. Join and participate in Groups and network within Groups. Post content to which others can respond and connect.

Annette Picora

- The first step to networking on LinkedIn is to make sure all of your LinkedIn profile sections are populated; this is especially true for the “Interest Section.” The Interest section on LinkedIn will connect you with like minds and expand your network beyond colleagues to strangers who have similar interests as you. The second step is to join groups. The third step is to post updates regularly.

Rosa Vargas, Career Steering

- First, send customized invitations to friends, work colleagues, managers with whom you have good relationships, and even some customers. Next, reach out to 2nd-level connections. You may already know some of them. If not, in your invitation, say how you both know [person]. Third, join groups; like and comment on others’ posts. After awhile, reach out to people who share your values and interests.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- Start by connecting with people you know. From there, follow your target companies and connect with people at those companies. Check out the “People You May Know” sidebar. Try to connect with one to two people each day. ALWAYS add a short personal note with your invitation! Finally, ENGAGE on LinkedIn by posting about topics that interest you and commenting and sharing other peoples’ content.

Kate Williamson, Sciencetech Résumés



I’m currently unemployed. How do I handle this on my LinkedIn profile?



Answers from our Experts:

- Fill the gap. Start consulting, volunteering or completing courses that will add value to a future role. Use this time to show potential employers how you turn negative circumstances into valuable opportunities for growth, achievement and profitability. Add these new roles and ventures to your résumé and share how you have consistently deployed your skills and delivered, no matter the environment.

Angela Watts, MyPro Business Service, LLC

- Consider filling in the gap with volunteer work and projects that you are currently undertaking in lieu of full-time work. If you are engaging in contract opportunities, focus your attention on the skill sets and leadership value you are ascertaining in that capacity. Project-based work is still lucrative and can be a good filler for your résumé where there is a gap of unemployment.

Wendi Weiner, The Writing Guru

- Be clear about what you are poised to do. You can do this by integrating relevant keywords in your headline, summary, and job titles. This ensures you can be found (and searchable!) for positions of interest. For a current position, add a volunteer or board position. Articulate how it adds to your unique value proposition and your skill development toward your job target.

Meg Applegate, Hinge Résumé Collective

- LinkedIn is an excellent tool for showcasing who you are, your talents, and the value you bring to any company. There's no need to broadcast that you aren't working. Focus on a headline that clearly brands you and a summary that's compelling and interesting. Make sure the reader knows exactly what you do well (and like to do), and let readers feel your energy, commitment, and drive.

Julia Holian, Julia Holian & Associates

- LinkedIn rates profiles based on employment, so hone in on creativity to list a current role under the Experience section that showcases what you can offer an employer. Your current job is job searching. List your current title as the title you are seeking and the company as "Seeking New Opportunity." Use the description box to list all of the job duties you know you are capable of doing.

Rashauna Arnold, BrandYou Career Coaching, LLC

- LinkedIn is a powerful networking/job search site! 94% of recruiters fill jobs here and this is where quality applicants need to be, especially if unemployed. This is where you get noticed and found. Content is king here. To show up in searches, pack your headline with keywords. Use the 120 characters to tell your reader what you bring to the table that most people in your industry don't or can't.

Cheryl Milmoie, Cardinal Expert Résumés

- Update the experience section, but do not make any other changes. One common mistake is to place "currently seeking opportunities/employment" in the headline. The headline provides keyword SEO for your portfolio. Don't waste this space by writing a sentence that adds no value. Instead, in your summary, place "connect with me to see how I can be of service."

Laura Bashore, Anew Résumé and Career Services

- Career paths are almost never linear. Life happens and we adjust. A period of unemployment is not the end of the world for your LinkedIn profile. Simply show how you spent the time. Personal sabbatical? Raise children? Recover from illness? Care for a loved one who was ill? Show that you were active and how you stayed connected and up-to-date professionally during your absence.

Rebecca McCarthy, The Written Coach

- You want to make sure you maximize every field in LI and present yourself in the best way. Recruiters will want to know about the great things you can offer so include information throughout your profile. The headline is an important element so use up to 120 characters and in this valuable profile space, highlight what you bring to the table or top skills instead of putting “currently unemployed.”

Ellen Steverson, StartingBlock Career Services LLC

- Your headline and current role are critical search drivers, and the first impression you create with recruiters and employers. “Open to Opportunities” doesn’t score you points on either front. Use those fields to highlight the job title you’re targeting, not your employment status. Follow up with a killer LinkedIn summary that closes with a call to action indicating that you’re actively looking.

Jennifer Fishberg, Career Karma Résumé Development & Career Services

- Add an end date to your current role and don’t add another. This way your profile is technically correct. You can also add any relevant volunteer experience.

Katrina Brittingham, VentureReady, LLC



How Can I Use LinkedIn without My Employer Finding Out?



Answers from our Experts:

- First of all, turn off notifications to network connections in Account Settings & Privacy (look for your photo in the menu header). There are many privacy options here, and you should review them all. Now visit the Jobs menu option (look for the briefcase icon in the menu header), click on the blue pencil by Career Interests, turn on your visibility to recruiters, and complete this section.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé and Writing Service

- Turn off the privacy setting that shares your profile changes with your network. Join new groups but keep your memberships private. Share articles related to your industry on leadership, communication, and technology trends. These strategies can help you attract positive attention and maintain your visibility with recruiters and networking contacts while keeping your job search private.

Kate Williamson, Sciencetech Résumés

- First, ensure all profile privacy and sharing settings are updated. Download and use LinkedIn’s Job Search Mobile App which offers complete privacy when searching, viewing, and applying for jobs. The app also prohibits notifications from reaching your network.

Tiffany Sappington

- To keep your job search under the radar, be sure to turn your notification settings off so connections are not notified of profile changes. I also suggest making updates to your profile little by little, starting from the bottom up, and including your company’s logo as your banner.

Companies are less likely to frown about LinkedIn activities if they see you proudly displaying their name!

Virginia Franco, Virginia Franco Résumés

- For employed individuals, I suggest positioning your LinkedIn content to market and promote your company and your role in making that happen. Other employers will look at the pride you are displaying in your profile's content and think "I want her/him to do that for us!" You will attract employers who will appreciate your passion for your employer while still displaying your own achievements.

Lisa Rangel, Chameleon Résumés

- One of my favorite tricks to ramping up a LinkedIn profile is to boast about your current company. Post company news to your feed and start dialogs that are relevant to your current industry. Your current employer will love how much of a team player you are, and potential employers will want to be in business with someone who will be a champion for them.

Liz Helton

- On a very practical level, check your privacy settings to ensure that your network is NOT notified when you change your profile. Then gradually and strategically begin editing, starting with keywords that are critical to your target role. Include them in the skills section, plus the summary and experience sections. Slowly add key, relevant achievements. Don't change your headline title right away.

Cathy Alfandre, Catherine A. Alfandre, LLC

- LinkedIn has a feature in its settings that allows you to block your profile from populating in candidate searches conducted by your current employer, while still letting others see you. Simply go to your profile settings, then click on "Job Seeking Preferences." Next, click on "Let Recruiters Know You're Open to Opportunities." Click on the "Update Career Interests" link. Slide the bar to "On."

Kiersten Troutman, Second Glance Résumés

Chapter Four

INTERVIEWING

The Ultimate Blind Date

You know the routine: Stress about what to wear and how to carry the conversation. Worry that they won't like you and ask you to see you again. Lose sleep waiting for the call back. Learn what the experts have to say about how to turn interviews into call backs and long-term working relationships.



Is it OK to dress casually for an interview if the company culture is informal and laid-back?



Answers from our Experts:

- Every interview is a business meeting no matter how casual the culture and environment the business operates in. You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Make it count and make it memorable. Dress for success!

Cheryl Milmoie, Cardinal Expert Résumés

- Even if a company prides itself on being informal and laid-back, it's always best to dress at least one level up for the interview. Remember, you can always ask the interviewer for advice on how to dress, do some reconnaissance work to see how the employees are dressed, and make sure you select an outfit that's one level up.

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- For interviews, I always recommend business attire. Save the casual attire for when you actually get the position and are taught the culture as an employee not an applicant. You want to appear to the hiring official that you came to conquer the interview, and you mean business. Once you get the position and are comforted to their ongoing way of life, then adjust your attire accordingly.

Alisha Brown, Alisha D. Brown Career Consulting

- A Silicon Valley manager once told me how a candidate didn't get the job, because he showed up in suit and tie, even though he was told to dress casually for the interview. If they don't tell you how to dress, don't be afraid to ask; they'll appreciate your asking. Finally, it never hurts

to dress just a bit above (shirt and tie for men; nice blouse and skirt for women) the observed dress code.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- The accepted rule of thumb that today's career coaches and hiring directors generally suggest is that you dress for your interview at one level above the manner in which you would dress for the actual position. In this case, if the company culture is informal and laid back, where people may wear jeans to work, I would recommend arriving for your interview in neat business casual attire.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés & Business Plans

- It depends. As a former startup executive, we always knew that the guy who showed up in a suit wasn't going to fit in with our shorts and sandals culture. My advice—ask the recruiter or hiring manager who's scheduling the interview. Try, "I generally default to business attire unless you have a different preferred dress code for candidates." If they want something else, they'll tell you.

Scott Hulshizer, The Résumé Expert

- I have worked at several such companies and have always expected the candidates to dress up for the interview- business professional and well groomed! You are trying to make a very positive first impression, so the way you look should enhance your marketing of you. Only if you are specifically told NOT to dress up should you consider business casual dress for the interview. Good luck!

Sharon Glennon

- It is acceptable to dress less formally when interviewing at a company that is more casual. However, that does not mean you should detract from looking sharp and professional. You should dress to "fit in" with the general company attire. Make sure your clothes are neat, clean, fit well, and look good on you. It's recommended that you dress a "notch above" what everyone else is wearing.

Julia Holian, Julia Holian & Associates



How do I answer "tell me about yourself" in an interview? I never know what they're looking for.



Answers from our Experts:

- The interviewer won't be swayed by hearing about your kids, hobbies, or other random information that doesn't relate to how you can help the employer be more successful in some way. Provide a short overview of who you are as a professional and weave in your personal brand that differentiates you from other candidates—with a focus on the results you deliver for companies like theirs. Be concise.

Kelly Donovan, Kelly Donovan & Associates

- They're looking for a confident, friendly person who affirms having the skills needed to do the job. Don't recite your life history or restate your résumé. Stay high-level. State some interests, accomplishments, and traits, and relate how they led you "here." And keep your answer to around one minute. The idea is to pique their interest and elicit more questions.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- The thing to remember is that an interviewer really wants to know who you are in relation to the job you applying for. You will always be asked a form of this question, so practice talking about yourself in a concise way—have this introduction at the ready for any professional setting. Then refine it based on the job for which you are interviewing.

Liz Helton

- This question is about your professional self, not your private life. Before the interview, think about qualities the interviewer will be looking for in a candidate. Reread your research, or at least the job post and your résumé. With your value proposition fresh in your mind, be ready to talk about your relevant qualifications and the ways you can contribute to organizational goals.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé and Writing Service

- When asked this question, this is your opportunity to present your agenda for the interview. Begin your answer by sharing information that goes beyond what is in your résumé. For example, why you chose your particular career or what motivated you to apply for the job. Summarize the key things you want the employer to know about you so he/she will ask questions around these.

Norine Dagliano, ekm Inspirations

- This question calls for a two-part response. Part 1 is an elevator pitch covering your background, skills, and accomplishments directly relating to the position. Part 2 should address why you are on the market, emphasizing that you are now in a favorable point in your career that has allowed you to be selective. A career coach can help you to develop both parts into a concise and winning pitch.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés and Business Plans

- What they are really asking is why are you a good fit for this role. Start with you, but make it all about them. First, discuss your expertise and number-one selling point. Then, give one or two quick examples of how your skills have added value to your past employers and show them how you're able to use those strengths to contribute to this company.

Melanie L. Denny, Résumé Evolution

- Try to focus on what you want them to know and how you want them to view you. Teamwork driven, relaxed mentality, involved in activities in a leadership capacity, etc. Recommend highlighting things about yourself that would show determination and goal accomplishments.

Alisha Brown, Alisha D. Brown Career Consulting

- Be honest! Tell them about yourself with topics that tie together your professional being and your personal being. Culture fit is important, so this is the manager's way of learning how you

work, what matters to you, why you do what you do, what drives you. Give them this information, not a narrative of your childhood and weekend hobbies (unless they are relevant).

Kelli Long, KG Workforce Solutions

- The interviewer's goal is to decipher whether or not you are a good fit for the position, and your response should focus on your key skills and most recent experiences relative to the job opening. Practice presenting your elevator pitch (promise of value) so you are able to clearly convey who you are and how your experiences will help the organization move forward.

Tammy Shoup, Breakthrough Résumé Writing Service

- Remember that this is just a discussion starter and not a request for you to give your whole autobiography! In just a couple of sentences describe yourself in terms of the position for which you are interviewing. You should have developed a personal branding statement and this is the time to use it! Show your passion for the kind of work the job requires.

Artie Fertig, Jobhuntercoach

- Your response may reveal personal information that should not be discussed, such as family situations or negative work experiences. Your response demonstrates your verbal communication style, interpersonal strengths, and priorities. Do not recite your résumé. Talk about your soft skills, attributes, and characteristics to demonstrate how you will be a match to the position's specific needs.

Jane Roqueplot, JaneCo's Sensible Solutions

- They do not want to know your life history. Whatever you decide to tell them, make it relevant to the position at hand. Tell them something that visibly excites you. For example, if you are interviewing for a sales position, tell the interviewer about a big deal you developed and closed. It is an opportunity to brag about yourself. Try not to repeat the résumé. Tell them something new.

Sally McIntosh, Advantage Résumés of St. Louis



I recently got fired from my last job; how do I explain this in an interview?



Answers from our Experts:

- Keep your answer short, honest, and to the point. Tailor your response to fit your circumstances and how your termination was handled. Don't give a lengthy explanation or details behind why you were fired. Simply state the reason and move the conversation forward to a different topic. DO NOT LIE. Your previous employer can disclose this information during a reference check.

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- The best way to handle this situation is to own it. Coming to terms with the incident will help overcome shame, guilt, or regret and build confidence, and enable you to discuss the matter in

a positive manner. It may also help to address the situation as a professional learning experience, something that will come across to the interviewer as a valuable trait in a candidate.

Lisa Parker, Parker

- Prepare and use factual answers that explain the situation succinctly. Include what you have learned, how it will not happen in the future, and how you are a fit for the job you are interviewing for. Don't over-explain and don't blame your boss or the old company. Share only as much as you are comfortable with and what the new organization will find out about during their background check of you.

Robin Schlinger, Robin's Résumés

- Acknowledge the firing but explain it BRIEFLY—no need to go into drawn-out details or get emotional. You can say, "I outlasted several rounds of lay-offs, but unfortunately, the last round included me. It was tough to handle at first, but in reflection, I learned so much from that experience. I'd like the chance to prove I've grown, and I'd consider this opportunity a fresh new start."

Rebecca McCarthy, The Written Coach

- Emotional Intelligence (EI) is currently a highly sought employee attribute. You can demonstrate high EI by talking about what you learned from being fired. An employer will most want to know: (1) that this is not a pattern in your employment history (2) that you used the experience to learn and improve and (3) that you are honest. Cover these points to make a negative experience a positive outcome.

Angela Watts, MyPro Business Services, LLC

- Be honest and make sure your answer is to the point. It's easy to let negative emotions enter into the conversation so practice, practice, practice your response. You will want to frame the experience in the most positive light possible (an error you've learned from) and then steer the conversation toward the strengths you bring to the table.

Tammy Shoup, Breakthrough Résumé Writing Service

- Calmly, truthfully, and very briefly describe the situation, making sure not to bash your former employer. Talk about the fact that your goals and the company's goals were not aligned, and you are now looking for a perfect fit for your skills and talents. Craft a statement that ends on a positive note, for example, what you learned from that experience and what you are looking forward to next.

Nellie Grinfield, Top of the Stack Résumé

- Briefly admit your mistake and explain how you have grown from this challenge. If applicable, give some scope around your termination. Not sugar coating your termination gives you authenticity and helps you connect with your interviewer who has gone through their own life challenges. After your short explanation, explain why you are excited about this position and how you are uniquely qualified.

Paula Christensen, Strategic Career Coaches

- Tell the truth. There's no need to give all of the gory details. Just explain your story and quickly shift the conversation back into a positive direction. Focus on what you've done to prevent recurring behavior and how your skills/expertise solve the employer's immediate problem. Practice your response until you're comfortable. Provide references that can vouch for your stellar performance.

Ashley Watkins, Write Step Résumés, LLC



What Questions Should I Ask at the End of My Interview to Help Me Stand Out?



Answers from our Experts:

- "You have reviewed my résumé, and we've had a chance to talk about the skills and experience I bring to the role; is there anything that concerns you about my candidacy?" This is a bold question. If they give a reason, you have a chance to counter it. Another: "What is your hiring timeline?" This question gives you an idea of when to expect a yes/no.

Cheryl Minnick, University of Montana

- I prefer an interactive interview. I created 20 questions, and usually select 5 or 6 that I want to ask during the interview. I always end the interview with a variation of these two questions: (1) Are there any areas in which you feel I fall short of your requirements? (If yes, address the negatives.) (2) It sounds to me as if we have a great fit. What do you think?

Donald Blum, Blum & Associates

- Assuming you have developed an understanding of the role and the company, ask about challenges the winning candidate will have in the coming year. It's also important to understand the company culture and work environment. Remember, you're interviewing them, too! Finally, ask for the job or to move forward in the hiring process. Many employers will not offer the job if you don't ask for it.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- Ask questions that illustrate your interest in meeting the company's needs/addressing their pain. Here are a few of my favorites: What are some of the problems that keep you up at night? If I am selected, what would be my two to three highest priorities the first few months of employment? If you offer me the job and a year from now give me a stellar performance review, what will I have done to earn it?

Norine Dagliano, ekm Inspirtations

- I recommend preparing three to five questions for the interview Q&A session. Some of my favorites include: (1) In your opinion, what makes this company a great place to work? (2) What do you see as the major internal challenges of this company? (3) Tell me about the company culture. (4) Is there anything else I can provide to help you make your decision? (5) What are the next steps in the hiring process?

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- Remember, an interview is an opportunity for you to find out if the position, culture, and company are a good fit for you too! Not asking questions sends the message that you are either unprepared or uninterested—or both. If you want the job, be prepared to ask questions. How would you describe the company's values? What are the biggest challenges of the job? When can I expect to hear from you?

Robert Rosales, EZ Résumé Services

- What qualities have I demonstrated today that make me a good candidate for this position? What hurdles might someone in this position need to overcome? What can I do to ensure I remain successful in this position, if selected? What is your management style? What do you enjoy most about working for this company? What are the goals of this department/company over the next year? Five years?

Tiffany Sappington

- First, prepare by researching the organization online and with current employees, so you naturally show you're informed. In the interview, ask about the company's goals; the position's challenges, goals, expectations, and performance measurements; and the skills and experiences they're seeking in a successful candidate. Summarize how you fit these requirements and can meet these challenges.

Holly Genser, Holly Genser Résumé & Career Transition Services

- Recruiters want to see that you have taken a genuine interest in the role and the company. You can demonstrate critical thinking and strategic evaluation during this part of the interview with questions about: (1) how the role provides value to the team and organization (2) recent company news or events and (3) what career progression might look like within their corporation.

Angela Watts, MyPro Business Services

- "When you are evaluating my performance a year from now, what will I have done to earn your stellar review?" This question: (1) forces the interviewer to imagine you in the job (2) shows that you want to be a top-notch contributor and (3) gets the employer to clarify the key deliverables and enables you to respond and show how you can provide them.

Artie Fertig, Jobhuntercoach

- Do your homework and ask questions that will help you better understand the company: its culture, your role, and their expectations. Don't ask questions that are easily answered by the company webpage or Google. If you have asked other interviewers similar questions, you can always add "I have asked some of your colleagues this question, but I am curious to hear your thoughts."

Lisa Hebert, LMH Advisors

- (1) Show you have done your research; "I see you have expanded your market. How did you prepare your sales team?" (2) Draw the interview back to you and how your skills will help solve their business challenges: "what in my résumé indicated that I might be a good fit?" (3)

Be ready to tackle any challenges you may present: "Is there anything that concerns you?" This lets you alleviate any concerns.

Deirdre Rock, Composed Career, LLC

- Towards the end of the interview with a hiring manager, ask them specifically what they want the person in this role to accomplish in their first 90 days on the job. Take good notes, and then, after sending the "thank you" note 48 hours later, send in a 90-day action plan outlining what you'll do in your first 90 days on the job. Model this after the hiring manager's answer to your question.

Rebecca Bosl, Dream Life Team



I was offered a new position, but the salary is less than I was hoping. What's the best approach for asking for more without jeopardizing the offer?



Answers from our Experts:

- Express your gratitude for the offer and enthusiasm for working at the company and start negotiating for a better offer. If you are polite and reasonable in your negotiation, this should not jeopardize the job offer. If the job in question will require negotiation skills, showcasing these abilities can actually help prove your worth.

Kelly Donovan, Kelly Donovan & Associates

- It's important to confirm details of the total compensation you're offered including bonus, paid time off, 401(k) match/profit sharing, and your share of any contributory benefits, such as health care premiums. Once you have the information to compare, if you find you are not getting the total compensation you want, ask if this is the best offer. Tell the recruiter what you are looking for and why!

Sharon Glennon

- First, know the market for your skills. Companies expect some negotiation. Tell them: given your skills and worth, the salary is lower than expected. Don't state a number. Ask whether they can do better. If they won't raise the salary, ask about a one-time bonus. Another option is to focus on the total benefit package. Maybe they can increase the vacation time, offer you stock, or another perk.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- Positioning to negotiate salary should start on the first interview. Demonstrate your salary request is based on what you can deliver for the company, what the company will gain in ROI and value, and what the market is paying for that role. Readdress your competitive research, ROI to be received by the firm and your ability to deliver to show why it would be beneficial to meet your request.

Lisa Rangel, Chameleon Résumés

- Negotiating is a respected skill in most professional settings, and it is expected during the hiring process. Any employment offer is really a package of wage and benefits. Identify potential areas for negotiation, including when a raise will occur and any items you could give

up in return for more money. Know your bottom line and be prepared to justify your request with value statements.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé and Writing Service

- Start with expressing appreciation and excitement for the opportunity. As long as your expectations are reasonable, be honest. Justify your request. They may say no; but if your expectations are realistic, then do you want to work and be underpaid? It is scary, but employees and employers have difficult discussions all the time. The offer stage is a great place to start having those discussions!

Kelli Long, KG Workforce Solutions

- You can say, "I know you've had the opportunity to interview a range of candidates, and hope that you feel that I'm the best qualified or you wouldn't offer me the position. I would hope that you could see that I deserve to be, therefore, in the top tier of compensation for this role when compared with others. What can we do to get to that place, if not now, over a defined period of time?"

Artie Fertig, Jobhuntercoach

- I hope you did your salary due diligence before the job offer came—in fact, before you started interviewing! If so, you should have an idea of what you're probably worth and at least a glimpse into what the company could offer. Reiterate your interest in the company and the position; then indicate your desire to find a common middle ground that works for both of you.

Georgia Adamson, A Successful Career

- Salary negotiations are very similar to buying real estate. The buyer makes a low offer hoping the seller accepts but also expects to receive a counter-offer and is usually willing to increase their bid in order to secure the property. If you receive an offer, you are their top choice. Seventy-five percent of the time a counter-offer is made, you will receive additional compensation. All you need to do is ask.

Jonathan Nugent, All★Star Career Services

- There are multiple pieces to compensation other than salary like health care benefits, paid time off, work from home options. For example, if you won't need the company's health care benefit (a huge expense for the employer), use this to negotiate for a salary modification after your first six months on the job. Salary negotiation is an important skill that will benefit you all your working life.

Cheryl Milmoe, Cardinal Expert Résumés



I just earned my master's degree and would like to use it to get a higher paying role. How do I get employers to pay me what I'm worth with my new degree?



Answers from our Experts:

- An advanced degree is a great way to stand out but that's not what's standing in the way between you and the compensation you deserve. People pay people to solve problems. Therefore, you need to identify the employer's primary pain points, especially the most expensive ones, and connect the dots between your qualifications, prior experiences, and successes to get the hiring manager's attention.

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- Along with your new degree, update your résumé and follow up with a cover letter, email or if you can have a meeting with your employer, explain to them the additional experience and transferable skills you already have that complement the degree. What did you learn while obtaining your degree that would help the company? What problems would you solve? State this and anything that helps your case.

Wendy Steele, Blueprint Résumés & Consulting

- Your salary is an investment and the employer wants to know he will get a high return on this investment. Just because you have a degree, it is not a promise of ROI. Consider what added value (skills and expertise) you bring to the table and how much additional revenue or cost savings the company can gain as a result of having you on the team. Sell it—don't tell it!

Norine Dagiano, ekm Inspirations

- Apply for positions that are advertised as "master's degree preferred"... or public and private sector job announcements that require an advanced degree. These are posted by employers who know that they must pay a premium for postgraduate education. On your résumé and communications, place the MA, MBA, or other designation after your name. This will signal to employers that you value your degree.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés and Business Plans

- Conduct research on "your worth" based on your degree, your years of experience, and the region you live in. Use Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Payscale, and salary.com to gather this information. Some of these sites will also have information on company pay ranges. Ask yourself why you are worth more \$\$ and answer in terms of what you can offer employers that will make their businesses more profitable.

Emily Salazar, St. Edward's University

- A graduate degree does not necessarily warrant a higher salary with your current company unless it was written into your contract or required for promotion/raise. A master's does not automatically make you worth more— your accomplishments set your value. Often, the best bet is to find and apply for a job with a company paying higher salaries, then jump ship and hope to land on a yacht.

- Focus your résumé on your desired new role with the appropriate title, keywords, and skills. Highlight previous achievements, such as collaborations, customer service, process improvements, revenue increases, and cost savings. List relevant courses, class projects, presentations, conferences, professional memberships, leadership positions, and all internships with the impacts you achieved.

Holly Genser

Chapter Five

Personal Branding

Why You Need a Solid Strategy and a Strong Brand

How do you want to be perceived? To demonstrate your uniqueness and promote yourself to prospective employers, you will want to build a compelling personal brand. Tell your story. Carve a niche. Be genuine. Establish credibility.



I spend so much time filling out applications with no callbacks. What is the best way to get noticed by employers?



Answers from our Experts:

- At least 70% of jobs are not published. To get them, you need to network, both in-person and online. Instead of surfing job boards, why not get in touch with all your friends, acquaintances, colleagues, fellow alumni and ask for a referral for a job opening wherever they are? The majority of hiring is friends hiring other trusted friends.

Rebecca McCarthy, The Written Coach

- Your résumé should convey your unique value proposition, be easy to scan through quickly and be ATS-friendly. If you have these points covered, consider alternative application channels like: (1) an employee referral program (2) introduction by a mutual connection (3) industry and/or company networking (4) contract or retained search recruiters and (5) connecting with the hiring manager on LinkedIn.

Rebecca Watts, MyPro Business Services, LLC

- The best way to get noticed by employers is to (a) identify the specific employers you want to work for and then (b) laser-focus your documents on their needs. Align your skills and experience and keyword optimize your document by leveraging job description info and prove you can solve their problems by including tangible results (how you've saved time or \$, reduced costs, improved productivity).

Tammy Shoup, Breakthrough Résumé Writing Service

- While applying online may be necessary, it shouldn't be your sole source of landing a job. Be sure your résumé is visually appealing and keyword optimized for the posting. Focus the bulk of your job search efforts on networking and building relationships with decision makers at

your target company. You must remember that people hire people they know, like, and trust. Don't forget to follow up.

Ashley Watkins, Write Step Résumés, LLC

- Talk to people. The most effective way to an interview is through a referral or recommendation from someone who can refer you to a specific job or introduce you to the hiring manager. Spruce up your LinkedIn presence and ask people to write LinkedIn recommendations for you that emphasize key qualities and successes that will be valuable to your target roles and prospective employers.

Kate Williamson, Sciencetech Résumés

- Show them you've got what they need. Examine the posting; note the skills, products, and buzz words listed. Then ensure your résumé and cover letter contain those keywords. Focus on your accomplishments. In short, customize your résumé for every application. Finally, do less applying online and start networking to find contacts who can hand your customized résumé to a hiring manager.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- First, make sure you have an effective résumé tailored for the kinds of positions you are applying for. It should also be ATS friendly. Many times résumés get overlooked simply because they're not formatted correctly, have no keywords, have scattered or missing text. Follow up with a cover letter that's specific to the company's needs. Make sure you have a fully built out and engaging LinkedIn profile.

Wendy Steele, Blueprint Résumés & Consulting

- Employers hire people they know and people they like. Become a known candidate. Tap your network or use LinkedIn to connect with people who work with the company. Learn about the company's needs and present yourself as a solution to meeting those needs – not a problem in need of a solution (a person in need of a job). Don't just fill out the application and wait; go the extra mile to stand out.

Norine Dagliano, ekm Inspirtations

- Get noticed by connecting with people. In fact, 61% of job applicants find jobs through referrals and networking while only 2% secure a gig via online job boards. Play to the numbers. Replace your flurry of applications with daily outreach within (and outside) your network. Be a student of those who have the job you want or work for a target company through informational interviews.

Meg Applegate, Hinge Résumé Collective

- The historically tried and true method is to obtain an advocate in the company who can bring your application to the attention of decision-makers. To achieve this, you will need to put on your sleuthing hat and use LinkedIn, Google, or your other networks to (1) get the names of folks on the inside, and (2) approach them deftly with a strategic pitch for help, using best practices in outreach.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés and Business Plans



How do I figure out what my own personal brand is?



Answers from our Experts:

- Your personal brand is expressed by your way of going in the workplace. Why do your supervisors turn to you? What expertise do your peers seek from you? What unique insight do you offer? What are you passionate about? How would you define your business philosophy? The answers to questions like these are the core of your professional brand and define your value to employers.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- Uncovering your own personal brand takes time and self-reflection. What's unique about you that people notice? What personality traits got you hired in the past? What have colleagues, managers, clients, professors, etc. said about you? What do you do better than anyone else? These introspective questions can help you understand the core brand messages you want to convey.

Kate Williamson, Sciencetech Résumés

- Ask yourself these questions:
 1. What do I want people to think of when they think of me?
 2. What is my area of subject-matter expertise?
 3. What kinds of problems do others seek me out to resolve?
- Then, stick to your answers. Too many professionals try to be one size fits all and nothing about them stands out. Draw your line in the sand and state..."I am an expert in the _____ space!"

Brenda Cunningham, Push Career Management, LLC

- First, add up your assets: (1) What you're really good at (2) how you differentiate yourself from other jobseekers and (3) your personal values. Once you understand your assets, you can compose the message you want to convey. Be consistent with that message, and you have your brand!

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- You have a personal brand whether you realize it or not. It's how others perceive you based on your work ethic and the value you bring. If you take a moment to do some self-reflection, you will uncover some common themes in your background that ultimately define who you are as a professional. Ask yourself what makes you unique, what you do well and how that translates into value for an employer.

Melanie Denny, Résumé Evolution

- Zeroing in on your area of expertise is key in identifying your brand and differentiating your skill set. Analyze your career successes to find the common thread. Do you bring people together? Are you an efficiency maven? Go beyond the results and look at the actions you took

to solve these business challenges. Determine the consistency across your roles that led to effective solutions.

Deirdre Rock, Composed Career, LLC

- Figuring out your personal brand is indeed a challenging task and is not something you can do in half an hour. Ideally you will conduct a 360 degree review of your personality, skills, values, and interests. After you have done this groundwork, you will have to find the overlap and interface of these areas and bring it down to a consistent message.

Tim Windhof, Windhof Communications - Career Services

- Consider how you want to be viewed within your professional industry. Discover your top strengths through self-assessment tools. You might ask others where your strengths lie or defer to past performance reviews. Discover where your passions lie within your industry and market yourself as a subject-matter expert in these areas.

Tammy Sappington



How does one go about getting hired without experience?



Answers from our Experts:

- You probably have more experience than you realize in the form of transferable skills. Feature these skills prominently on your résumé so employers can see that you have The Right Stuff even if previous and target job titles don't align. To get more experience, volunteer at local nonprofit organizations and check for internships—paid or unpaid—at companies in your target industry.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- The catch-22 stems from not effectively positioning your unique assets. For the majority of new graduates, your education is your greatest asset. If you can play up a relevant internship or co-op experience, you will give yourself a leg up on your competition. Finally, don't ignore the transferable skills that you picked up from any part-/full-time work or volunteer experiences.

Kate Williamson, Scienteck Résumés

- Find or make opportunities to develop professional knowledge and connections in the field: formal education, internships, certification programs, seminars, job shadowing, field networking events, introductions and mentorship programs. You could also research field topics and write blog posts or LinkedIn articles to demonstrate concept mastery. Gain credibility when you can't get experience.

Angela Watts, MyPro Business Services

- I know you don't want to hear this, but sometimes the best way to gain experience in a new field is to consider doing it for FREE. Volunteering in a related role counts as experience. Don't underestimate volunteer work simply because you weren't compensated for it. Volunteer

experience is still experience. Put it right in the experience section of your résumé and feature any relevant courses.

Brenda Cunningham, Push Career Management, LLC

- Everyone has “experience” that can translate to job skills. Volunteer work, projects for friends or family, extracurricular activities, side hustles, etc. could all be considered valuable experience. Experience doesn’t necessarily mean paid work. Focus on highlighting relevant skills acquired through everyday situations and general life management.

Carla Deter, LinkedIn Profile and Résumé Writing Service

- Volunteer at an entity that could use your enthusiasm and talent. If credentials would provide credibility, get them. If more knowledge would help, sign up for webinars or courses. And finally—network, network. Instead of applying and hoping, find someone to introduce you as the enthusiastic go-getter with credentials and volunteer experience who would be a great addition to our company.

Edward Lawrence, Getstarted, LLC

- In essence, become what you want to become. Immerse yourself in your new field by joining industry organizations, branding yourself as the intended job title and volunteering your time working in your new industry. This experience counts whether you got paid or not. Also, highlight transferable skills from your background on your résumé and LinkedIn along with your volunteer role.

Melanie Denny, Résumé Evolution

- First, I would argue that no one is a blank slate. If you are going after a position, there is something that makes you feel qualified to take on this role. Volunteering, education, extracurriculars are great ways to demonstrate your expertise. Secondly, get out from behind a computer, stop canvassing your résumé to any entry-level job, and go meet people that can help you carve your own path.

Liz Helton

- New college grads face this challenge. Companies understand they lack direct work experience for entry positions, but they do want the education needed, core-soft skills and the best-person fit. Show skills from internships, volunteering, summer jobs, and even working in the family business, such as teamwork, collaboration, time management, and customer service, all with a positive attitude.

Tom Powner, Career Thinker, LLC

- Work experience is gained via jobs (true), but also internships, field experience, practicum, undergrad research, volunteerism, and service-learning, while educational experience is gained via school (true), but also on-line short-courses and certification programs (Udemy). Career coaches and résumé writers are well-trained to draw out and frame clients’ relevant experience.

Cheryl Minnick, University of Montana

- Some ideas to tackle this dilemma: (1) Use your network to get a foot in the door; employers are more likely to take a chance on someone who comes highly referred. (2) If possible, volunteer somewhere to get relevant experience. (3) Take a class to gain key skills. (4) In résumés/letters, showcase your transferable skills. (5) If you're currently employed, seek out projects to beef up your experience.

Cathy Alfandre, Catherine A. Alfandre, LLC



How does one go about getting hired without experience?



Answers from our Experts:

- To skirt ageism, "youth-anize" your résumé with Gmail (avoid AOL/Yahoo); add only cell #; focus on last 10-15 years; merge early jobs into EARLY CAREER; add youthful INTERESTS (marathons); avoid "older" associations (Elks); update your headshot, glasses, and hair; omit high school; add tech-savvy SKILLS including current tech and social media; use modern résumé format; hire an NRWA résumé writer.

Cheryl Minnick, University of Montana

- Age-proof your résumé by highlighting the value you bring to the table, not number of years in the workforce. Include recent professional development. Leave out graduation dates, early jobs, and old technology. Still using an AOL email address? Create a new Gmail account for your search. If you need to list older employment, incorporate an early career section focused on achievements, not dates.

Jennifer Fishberg, Career Karma Résumé Development & Career Services

- On your résumé and LinkedIn profile, present the past 15-20 years of work history. If you have relevant experience further back, create an "Early Career Experience" heading and list job titles/companies without dates, as well as key contributions. Also, don't include graduation dates with degrees. Stay positive; you will find a company that values knowledge and a good work ethic over age!

Kathy Keshenberg, A Career Advantage

- One of the ways to avoid age discrimination is to show no more than ten years of past work experience on your résumé, if possible. Do not show dates for degrees and/or certificates. Update your style of dress to make sure it is not aging you. Make sure your verbiage doesn't age you. For example, refrain from saying, "Young people these days..." or "When I first started working,"

B.J. Ayers, Mesa United Way-Bridge to Employment

- People tend to work longer now-a-days, and age is NOT necessarily a disadvantage. Many employers prefer hiring older workers because they are more mature, experienced, dedicated, loyal, take pride in their job, etc. If concerned, on the résumé you should eliminate dates

where possible; e.g., education, memberships, awards, etc., and limit work experience to the last 10 to 15 years.

Donald Blum, Blum & Associates, LLC

- Your Résumé:
 1. Have a current email address. "AOL" may make you appear older.
 2. Remove college graduation dates.
 3. Add an "Earlier Experience" section for jobs older than 15 years—no dates.
 4. Remove "Objective Statement" and "References Furnished Upon Request."

You:

1. Get current about technology.
2. Have a positive attitude.

Laura Slawson, The Creative Advantage Freelance Writing Service, LLC

- Your next employer is primarily interested in the last 10 years of your experience (as a predictor of your future performance). Construct an achievement-oriented document that focuses on this time period and summarizes the important points of your pre-2000 career without using dates. Make sure your LinkedIn profile echoes this approach, and choose a youthful or, at least, vibrant profile photo.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- Don't be a "tech dinosaur." Learn new technologies that can improve productivity and profitability. According to a 2018 Transamerica Survey, 61% of Millennials and 52% of Gen X-ers revealed negative perceptions of workers 50+. Talk about how you delivered on opportunities for improvement. Market your value. Improve your LinkedIn presence. LinkedIn is today's networking—don't be invisible!

Wendy Haylett, AboveAllRésumés

- Address the age concerns employers have—"not comfortable with technology, resistant to change, outdated education, difficulty communicating across generations"—by creating a LinkedIn profile and résumé that illustrate what technologies you use, what challenges and changes you've managed, what projects you've worked on and with whom, and what current classes and training you've completed.

Norine Dagliano, ekm Inspirations

- (1) Limit work experience to the last 10-15 years. (2) Omit graduation dates older than 10 years. (3) Emphasize relevant professional development to show that you stay current with industry trends. (4) Work with a professional résumé writer to give your résumé the splash of personality it needs to gain traction with prospective employers and prevent interviews from slipping through the cracks.

Kate Williamson, Sciencetech Résumés

- Keep your skills and qualifications current. Experience is still important but evolving technology, industry trends, and techniques are heavily factored. Most employers are interested in your most recent 10-15 years of employment. Tailor your résumé to specifically address the hiring need outlined in the job description. Edit your résumé and LinkedIn profile to answer the employer's need.

Robert Rosales, EZ Résumé Services



How can I get recruiters to help me with my job search?



Answers from our Experts:

- Ask them directly, in a professional and approachable manner. Search for recruiters on LinkedIn and send a personalized connection request. Try working with a recruiting firm that specializes in your desired industry and/or geographic location.

Tammy Sappington

- Most recruiters work for their clients (employers). This means their primary job is to find qualified applicants for their clients, not as much to find jobs for qualified applicants. Therefore, establishing relationships with recruiters who specialize in your industry is essential. Being active on job boards and LinkedIn will also draw recruiters' attention.

Kelli Long, KG Workforce Solutions

- The first step in engaging with recruiters is to do a little research to make sure they are the right recruiter for you and your career objectives. Many recruiters specialize by industry (tech, biopharma, marketing) or by position (project managers, software engineers, executives). Search for recruiters on LinkedIn and review their profiles to see if they are a match. Check and then connect!

Madelyn Mackie, Activate Your Career Dreams

- Recruiters work for whoever pays them which, in most cases, is the employer. You want to get your résumé into their database, and if your background and qualifications match a search they are conducting, you will hear from them. Making contact with recruiters is just one strategy in your job-search tool box. Get your résumé to a number of recruiters and then spend your time on other efforts.

Kathy Keshemberg, NCRW, A Career Advantage

- The recruiter works for the client, not the job seeker. Recruiters don't find jobs for people; they find people for jobs. Find recruiters who specialize with your specific industry or experience. Optimize your résumé/LinkedIn; if they don't convey you're the best candidate for the target position, the recruiter will just set it aside in the "no" pile. Be honest and build a strong relationship.

Tom Powner, Career Thinker, LLC

- Ask a few colleagues or former co-workers with similar backgrounds as yours whom they would recommend. Use LinkedIn to search for recruiters by industry or location and send a personalized invitation to connect. From there, you can check out mutual connections between you and the recruiter and view his/her activity, such as job postings that align with your career targets.

Paula Christensen, Strategic Career Coaches

- The goal of most recruiters is to find currently employed “rock star” candidates who can be tempted by an attractive offer, so contacting them is not always a good strategy. However, if you are in IT, exec, medical, engineering, etc., you can ask colleagues in your field for a referral to a recruiter or help them to find you by boosting your LinkedIn profile with the appropriate key search terms.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés & Business Plans

Chapter Six

WORKING WITH AN EXPERT

Enjoy the Benefits of a Professionally Written Résumé

Should you engage a professional résumé writer? A professional writer, like the many NRWA members who have contributed to this ebook, understand what hiring managers and recruiters are looking for and know how to optimize your career history — your skills, accomplishments, education, and more. Working with them can increase your likelihood of getting that coveted interview.



I struggle with writing my own résumé, and I'd like someone to help me. Where can I get my résumé professionally done?



Answers from our Experts:

- Certified writers understand the nuances of the modern job market and the role of technology plays in the hiring process. If you're serious about investing in yourself (and shortening your job search), check out the NRWA database, where you can find résumé writers listed by credentials, services, industry specialties, and location.

Kate Williamson, Scientech Résumés

- First, decide whether you feel most comfortable working in-person with a résumé writer or if you are fine with a "virtual" process. Next, go online to www.thenrwa.com/findarésuméwriter, read the helpful information, and click on "Begin your search now." A new page will appear that allows you to search by state, service offerings, and résumé specialties, as well as advanced search options.

Grant Cooper, Strategic Résumés & Business Plans

- First, it is important to choose a certified professional résumé writer that is skilled and trained in the latest trends. There are several professional résumé writing organizations that ALL have a geographic listing of certified writers. Find a few that sound interesting by examining their credentials and contact more than one, to discuss strategy, timing, and cost, to determine the best fit.

Donald Blum, Blum & Associates, LLC

- Although there are several online resources, I highly recommend clients to seek a trained writer associated with a professional writing organization like the National Résumé Writers' Association. In doing so, you can feel confident in receiving a finished product that adheres to professional standards, passes through an applicant tracking system, is keyword targeted, and has an aesthetic appeal.

Kiersten Troutman, Second Glance Résumés

- Unfortunately, it is easy to find poor writers via the internet, even among those who mean well. The single best resource for trained professional writers who are also held to a high ethical standard is the nonprofit organization, National Résumé Writers' Association (TheNRWA.com). You may find free résumé assistance at Workforce Development centers, but the quality of that help is hit-or-miss.

Mary Jo King, Alliance Résumé & Writing Service

- A number of résumé and career certification authorities exist with qualified résumé writers within their membership. The most stringent certification comes through the National Résumé Writers Association (NRWA). A writer that is certified with the NRWA is called a Nationally Certified Résumé Writer, and has passed a rigorous exam to receive this certification.

Rebecca Bosi, Dream Life Team

- Research "professional résumé writers" that have NRWA (and other) affiliations. Identify and contact two to three résumé writers. Finally, select the writer with whom you feel you have a good fit. This is a professional relationship that can potentially last until your retirement date. Partnering with a résumé writer for the long term can yield positive results.

Michele (McCann) Kelley, CareerPro, Inc.

- You're making a smart choice to have your résumé written by a professionally trained and certified writer. And you're in the right place—the NRWA website! Go to our home page under Search For A Writer. Research shows recruiters value candidates with professionally written résumés 7% more than those with a DIY version; candidates found jobs at 32% higher rate and found them in three months or less.

Cheryl Milmoie, Cardinal Expert Résumés

- Although there are a variety and multitude of choices available to hire a professional résumé writer, it is important that you do your research to ensure each advertisement is legit and presents results. One resource could be the database that is available on NRWA's website to find a reputable résumé writer in your area, or even virtually.

Alisha Brown, Alisha D. Brown Career Consulting

CONTRIBUTING EXPERTS

The NRWA thanks the following contributors for generously sharing their expertise with their colleagues, job seekers, and the general public. Answers submitted to questions on the *Résumé Experts* forum are reviewed carefully and scored by a Nationally Certified *Résumé Writer* according to rigorous NRWA standards. The best answers are selected and posted to the website. Those who are selected earn the honor of displaying the *Ask the Experts Contributor* badge (right) on their website and other marketing materials. If you need an expert to help you with your job search, look no further than here:



Carol Adams

Ideal Résumés, LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Andrea Adamski

Write for You Résumés

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Georgia Adamson, NCRW, NCOPE

A Successful Career

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Amy Adler

Five Strengths Career Transition Experts

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Cathy Alfandre, NCOPE

Catherine A. Alfandre LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Meg Applegate

Hinge Résumé Collective

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Rashauna Arnold

BrandYou Career Coaching LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Jean Austin, NCRW, NCOPE

Talents Presented Résumé Writing and Job Search Strategies

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

B.J. Ayers

Mesa (AZ) United Way-Bridge to Employment

Anne Barnwell

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Karen Bartell

Best-in-Class Résumés

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Laura Bashore

Anew Résumé and Career Services

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Bridget Batson, NCOPE

Houston Outplacement

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Brenda Bernstein

The Essay Expert

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Donald Blum

Blum & Associates, LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Rebecca Bosl, NCRW, NCOPE

Dream Life Team

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Katrina Brittingham

VentureReady, LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Alisha Brown

Alisha D. Brown Career Consulting

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Paula Christensen

Strategic Career Coaches

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Fred Coon

Stewart, Cooper, & Coon

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Grant Cooper

Strategic Résumés & Business Plans

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Brenda Cunningham

Push Career Management, LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Norine Dagliano, NCRW, NCOPE

ekm Inspirations

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Melanie Denny, NCOPE

Résumé Revolution

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Carla Deter

LinkedIn Profile and Résumé Writing Service

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Kelly Donovan, NCOPE

Kelly Donovan & Associate

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Elaine Doremus

RésumésWritten.net

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Louise Duffield, NCOPE

Gates Talent

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Michelle Dumas, NCRW, NCOPE

Distinctive Career Services, LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Cliff Eischen, NCRW

Eischen Professional Résumé Service

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Artie Fertig

Jobhuntercoach

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Jennifer Fishberg

Career Karma Résumé Development & Career Services`

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Margo Flores, NCOPE

Writing With A Flair, LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Virginia Franco, NCRW, NCOPE

Virginia Franco Résumés

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Holly Genser, NCRW, NCOPE

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Sharon Glennon

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Nellie Grinfeld, NCRW, NCOPE

Top of the Stack Résumé

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Wendy Haylett

AboveALLRésumés

Lisa Hebert, NCOPE

LMH Advisors LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Cherie Heid

Competitive Edge Résumé Service

Liz Helton

Julia Holian & Associates

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Julia Holian

Julia Holian & Associates

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Scott Hulshizer, NCOPE

The Résumé Expert

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Phil Hurd, NCOPE

Catalyst Résumés LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Demisha Jennings

She Assists, LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Gayle Keefer

TruMark Résumés

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Melissa Kelley

Kelley Résumés & Wordsmithing

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Michele (McCann) Kelley

CareerPro, Inc.

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Pat Kendall, NCRW

Advanced Résumé Concepts

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Kathy Keshemberg, NCRW, NCOPE
A Career Advantage
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Mary Jo King, NCRW, NCOPE
Alliance Résumé and Writing Service
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Cathy Lanzalaco, NCOPE
Inspire Careers
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Edward Lawrence
Getstarted, LLC
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Christine Lewis
Professional Designs Résumé Service

Holly Leyva
Virtual Vocations, Inc.
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Kelli Long
KG Workforce Solutions
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Madelyn Mackie, NCOPE
Activate Your Career Dreams
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Rebecca McCarthy, NCOPE
The Written Coach
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Sally McIntosh, NCRW, NCOPE
Advantage Résumés LLC of St. Louis
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Cheryl Milmoe, NCOPE
Cardinal Expert Résumés
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Cheryl Minnick, NCRW
University of Montana
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Mill Montejo, NCOPE
The Talent Mill | Job Search Superhero | Dr Mill
Computer Wiz
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Jonathan Nugent
All★Star Career Services
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Lisa Parker
Parker-CPRW
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Annette Picora
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Thomas Powner, NCOPE
Career Thinker Inc.
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Lisa Rangel
Chameleon Résumés
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Annette Richmond
Career Intelligence Résumé Writing & Career
Services
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Camille Roberts
CC Career Services
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Deirdre Rock, NCOPE
Composed Career LLC
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Jane Roqueplot
JaneCo's Sensible Solutions
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Robert Rosales, NCOPE
EZ Résumé Services
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Emily Salazar
St. Edward's University
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Tiffany Sappington
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Robin Schlinger, NCOPE
Robin's Résumés
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Heather Rothbauer-Wanish
Feather Communications
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Alexia Scott
A Winning Résumé, LLC
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Tammy Shoup
Breakthrough Writing Service
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Laura Slawson
The Creative Advantage Freelance Writing
Service LLC
[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Laura Smith-Proulx, NCOPE

An Expert Résumé

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Columba Smith

Columba Smith Résumés

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Laurie Smith

Creative Keystrokes Executive Résumé Service

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Wendy Steele

BluePrint Résumés & Consulting

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Ruth Sternberg

The Entrepreneurial Job Search

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Ellen Steverson, NCRW, NCOPE

StartingBlock Career Services LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Kiersten Troutman

Second Glance Résumés

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Donna Tucker, NCOPE

CareerPRO Résumé Center

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Rosa Vargas, NCRW

Career Steering

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Ashley Watkins, NCRW, NCOPE

Write Step Résumés LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Angela Watts

MyPro Business Services

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Wendi Weiner, NCRW, NCOPE

The Writing Guru

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Kate Williamson, NCOPE

Sciencetech Résumés

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Chelsea Wiltse, NCOPE

Seasoned and Growing LLC

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)

Tim Windhof, NCRW

Windhof Communications – Career Services

[Contact Details / View NRWA member profile](#)