FREE TIPS

WRITING YOUR RESUME

So, you're seeking a new position? The first, and universally dreaded task, is to put together a new resume, or find the old one somewhere on your hard drive and brush it up. Maybe you haven't been in the job market for awhile – or you're fresh out of school and have never crafted a resume before. The following information should assist you in getting your resume to the "top of the list" of **the person who will be responsible for receiving and sorting through the in-coming resumes, and scheduling interviews.**

A RESUME FOR YOUR AUDIENCE.

Who is your audience? Who is going to be looking at your resume? There are 4major possibilities.

1.) An Internal Recruiter: Some companies hire recruiters internally to act as part of their Human Resources Departments.

2.) An HR Manager: Some companies ask their HR Manager to receive, and screen incoming resumes, on top of their other tasks such as company benefits, employee problems, compliance with local laws, etc

3.) A Department Manager or Lead: Some companies ask the Department Manager or Lead to whom you'd report if you were hired, to do the screening.

4.) An Exterior Recruiter: Some companies decide to outsource the function of seeking, screening and scheduling interviews to groups like The Talley Group.

What's the process?

 "New York Minute". One of the four types of persons above will be looking at your resume when they receive it. Did you know that the average resume gets **less than one minute** of the recruiter or manager's time? Why? Most recruiters or managers receive 100 or more resumes for each position posted or advertised. Maybe five of those will actually meet all of the required criteria– but the incoming resumes must be sorted. Consequently, the process becomes one of elimination, not selection.

Elimination not selection. Since the person who receives your resume has to go through a lot of resumes, he/she is going to be **looking to eliminate resumes, not choose resumes**. He/she will initially be looking for the three to five key qualifications that the position requires: education, technologies, competencies, and industry experience. If all of those basic requirements are not found in the first minute or so, the resume will go into pile #2 –

eliminated. **Misspellings, improper dating or missing time, resumes that are hard to read, and incomplete resumes are deadly to your interests** at this stage.   Such resumes are immediately put in the "no" pile, and are likely not to be looked at again.

"Key words" to find candidates. All recruiters look for "key words". If the key words are not easy to see on the resume, you're likely to be eliminated, even if you have the experience or skill they're looking for. In fact, in many computerized resume systems, the more times the pertinent "key words" appear, the higher the resume is elevated in the cue.

What are these "key words"? Let me give you an example. Let's say we're looking for a Civil Engineer with 10 years of experience in site development, water run-off, grading, sub-division design, proficiency in Land Development Desktop and all Microsoft Office products. Let's say that exactly fits you.   What "key words" is that recruiter going to be looking for on your resume?   "BSCE", or "BACHELORS DEGREE IN ENGINEERING", "LDD", and "SITE DEVELOPMENT" are the key words. Look at your resume with a critical eye. Are you using words which are standard and universal to describe your education, software tools and you field of work?

Technical Resumes. The resume of a person in a technical field will *necessarily* be different than someone seeking a management or trade position. It will probably be much longer – three or more pages. It must include the programs or projects on which you have worked, the specific technical solutions you were tasked with completing, and the tools, software or otherwise, that you used to accomplish that task.

 We once received the resume of an Aerospace Engineer who had worked for The Boeing Company for twenty years. His resume was only one page long, listed different departments he'd worked in, but didn't tell us what model or part of the airplane he'd worked on. It included no technical information, software or tools. It was, quite simply, the worst resume we'd ever seen. But, he'd been working at Boeing for twenty years – surely he'd **done something!** *It required a call from us*. When the proper format was explained to this individual, he exclaimed, "No wonder no one has been calling me!"   He called us back the very next day, telling us that he had followed our advice, and had had three responses for open positions within fifteen minutes of posting the new resume.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER - GENERAL RULES

1. **Use a clear format and font.** Use "**bold" to highlight key words** in the job description, former positions or titles, and underline to add interest. In other words, *make the resume easier to read*. Don't used fonts that look like script, or are smaller than "11".
2. **Resume Formats.** There are three basic types of resume formats 1.) Chronological, 2.) Functional and 3.) Combination. The **chronological resume is organized by employment history**, with your most recent position listed first. The **functional resume focuses on skills and experience** rather than employment history. And, combination, is just what is says, **a combination of chronological and functional**, listing the functions,

software tools, etc. bulleted at the top, and followed by the employment history. The combination format gives you the opportunity to bullet your skills and tools at the very top of the resume, utilizing the keywords that we talked about earlier. **We actually prefer the combination format** because it easier for the recruiter to read, which is likely to move you up in the cue. Most of our clients also prefer the combined or chronological resume format. But, **be sure that the skills and tools you list are fresh** and relevant. If you used AutoCAD 20 years ago, don't put that at the top in your keywords.

3. **The difference between a CV and a resume.** If you are a Canadian, or studied in the UK, and/or many other countries of the world, you may be accustomed to using a CV (Curricula Vitae) instead of a resume. The purpose is the same, but the form is quite different. We receive numerous CV's from potential candidates – but they need to be altered for the U.S. market. Why? A CV typically includes date of birth, marital status, oftentimes includes a photo, and many other pieces of personal information which **are not legal to send to a client** in the U.S. Utilize the rules here, and then talk to your recruiter to make sure your resume conforms to U.S. standards.

4. **Do not include your Social Security Number.** It is a great surprise to us, in this time of identity theft, that so many people still put their Social Security Numbers at the top of their resumes. There are some very large employers who request the Social Security Numbers of their applicants for entry into their systems, but we think this a very dangerous practice. The possible exception would be a social security number required for a pre-employment drug screen which requires the written permission of the candidate, and is subject to federal HIPAA privacy standards.

5. **List your previous positions,** company, job title and dates with the *most recent position first*. **Don't leave out any time.** Account for all of previous years, even if you need to put in "subsistence position" if you were forced to get a job just to keep food on the table.   Most companies would prefer knowing that you returned to school, or stayed out of work for a year while your Mother was gravely ill, than to wonder if you might have been in jail for the missing year.

6. **Remember to include software versions.** There are many versions of common software design tools. Be sure you say, AutoCAD 2010, or CATIA v4, or v5. If you have CATIA v4, but not v5, and the client is utilizing version 5 you are wasting your time and theirs.

7. **Include budget responsibilities.** If you have been responsible for a budget, list the budget amount for which you were responsible.

8. **Progressive responsibility.** If you have a career of jobs in which your responsibility has steadily increased, state that in a sentence at the bottom of your skills section.

9. **Avoid Abbreviations**. Be aware that your reader may not be familiar with acronyms utilized by your past employer, or military group. The acronym used by that company may be exactly the same process as your target company, but does not translate as such to them. So put the acronym in and then spell it out in parenthesis**.**

10. **No photographs or graphics.** Don't use photographs or graphics, or include samples of your designs with the resume. If the file is too fat it is likely to be deleted before it is considered.

11. **Use a recent version of Microsoft WORD. Almost every company utilizes this software.** Pdf is great, but some companies have a harder time opening it. You want your resume to be easy to open and read, so use the most universally accepted tool.

12. **Objective.** The writer has a personal distaste for "Objective:" written at the top of the resume. Many recruiters agree. Stating what you're looking for at the top of the resume is **the best place to make an "eliminating statement".** So many times, the "Objective" is not what the client is offering. This is the prime place to overstate your abilities or sound like your full of yourself. In fact, one of the most consistent criticisms of engineering personnel is "arrogance". We see descriptions like "top-tier", "outstanding abilities", "superb management", etc., which makes the writer sound like a braggart. Nobody wants to work with a braggart. This is another good reason to utilize an outside recruiter like The Talley Group who can say good things about you to the client without your having to do so.

13. **Don't expect all positions to be posted or advertised.** Just because you don't see a position posted doesn't mean that there isn't one there. No confidential search is ever posted. This is a prime reason to send your resume to outside recruiting groups like The Talley Group. We are often tasked with finding a replacement for an unadvertised position.

14. **Three sets of eyes.** Don't send your resume anywhere unless you've had three sets of eyes read it carefully for spelling and grammar errors, and unclear passages. One assumes that a person looking for work in Engineering or Technical fields will be capable of high level detail work. If you have spelling errors on your cover letter or resume you are telling the potential employer, "I'm lousy at detail." Utilize spell-check, but realize that *spell-check will only catch misspellings that are not actually words*. An improper word is not caught by spell check.

15. **Tweak each resume.** Change the cover letter and/or resume to fit the job for which you are applying. Again, bold the words that are listed in the job description.

16. **Resume length.** We are frequently told that the state employment office, and other supposed "resume experts" tell job seekers to keep their resume to one page. This may be true for some positions; however, this is **not the case for technical resumes**! Again, the persons who are looking at your technical resume want to know what programs you have worked on, and for what details you were responsible. They want to know what software tools you have utilized, and manufacturing processes you have worked under. This is particularly true of contract positions where there is no training, and you will be expected to walk in and "hit the ground running". So, don't worry about the length of your technical resume. Make it clear, succinct, and easy to read - not abbreviated.

17. **Multiple short-term positions.** One of the reasons an otherwise qualified candidate might be eliminated from consideration, is having multiple short-term positions on their resume. It is our experience that many excellent employees have been forced into multiple short-term positions by circumstances for which they were not responsible. A move with a spouse, the closure of a company, the change of company names, and the closure of a department or project due to funding**,** are just a few of the reasons for this. If you have multiple short term positions on your resume, you are likely to look **unreliable - a risky choice.** You must be prepared with short, clear explanations about

the reason you left each job. Make sure, if you weren't "fired", that you put **"Contract Completed" or "Lay-off due to RIF"**, whichever is appropriate, after each job. We need to know that you were hired for a short-term contract, or that you were unexpectedly laid off due to some industry issue. The person with a history of multiple short-term positions will particularly benefit by utilizing the help of good outside recruiters, like the Talley Group. They will know the client and will be able to answer the client's inevitable questions before you're eliminated from consideration.

18. **Send it electronically.** The day was that a serious job-seeker would put together a good resume on top quality paper, put it in a folder, and send it by mail to a potential company. That day is gone. We still occasionally receive resumes by mail, but they are simply lost in the scramble. Why? Technical people are expected to be capable of using all or the latest technological tools; and, resumes are now routinely sent by e mail, or uploaded to company databases. A lovely resume, mailed to an employer, needs must be scanned and converted to an electronic form before it can be seen. It probably won't happen. Send it electronically.

19. **Salary expectations. Do not put this on your resume or cover letter**.
Salary expectations are the last thing to be discussed when seeking a direct hire position. However, if you are working with a recruiter like The Talley Group, don't hesitate to let your recruiter know what your salary expectations are. The recruiter may disagree with you based on current market conditions, but he/she will be in a better position to negotiate on your behalf if he/she knows what you *need to* make. In the case of contract positions, your hourly expectation will be sent to the client with your resume. This is a very different circumstance. In either case, being coy with your recruiter about salary expectations, need for re-location assistance, benefits, etc., will not help your cause.

We see many entry level people who have unrealistic salary expectations. Don't expect to walk out of college and command huge dollars for your first job.   You may have learned the skills, but you have to learn the position. You have to prove your abilities and work ethic to an employer. If you stay out of work too long searching for the perfect position you're likely to look like a "stale cracker", and potential employers wonder, "What is wrong with this individual?" "Why haven't they been hired already?"

20. **Don't believe the naysayers.**   Don't believe anyone who says, "You'll never find a job looking in the newspaper", or "The jobs they're posting aren't real jobs".   Many recruiters have advanced notice of positions that will be opening up in a week or two, or in a month, and they post the positions to have candidates ready on the day that the positions come open. Just keep checking websites, job sites, newspapers, and the web. Get involved in social media where other folks with the same skills are involved in groups, and where open positions are often linked. Finding a new position is a full-time position in itself.

We sincerely hope that these free tips will help you in putting your resume together – and that ultimately, find you the position you've always wanted.