



Write
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Plus

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How to Write a Winning Resume

By Dr. Kathleen Begley
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Note to Readers: *This free e-newsletter, sent only upon request, comes from Dr. Kathleen Begley, owner of Write Company Plus communications training. She writes weekly on topics connected to business and personal success. Dr. Begley recently launched a new blog called "Meandering to a Different Drummer." Click onto the website address at the end of this article to read her one-paragraph musings on life, death, and how to communicate as well as your dog.*

During the past few years, as millions of U.S. jobs have virtually disappeared at once thriving organizations, resume writing has taken on a dreaded, negative, overwhelming life of its own. Because so many professionals are out of work for the first time ever, thousands of people – possibly you -- are putting together self-promotional packages with little to go on other than faint memories of your post-college job search.

Considering that most fear comes from lack of experience, I suggest that you'd be crazy not to feel intense apprehension at this unfamiliar task. Can you say stark raving panic? Consider this statement at www.how-to-write-a-resume.org, one of thousands of job hunting websites on the Internet. "Resume writing is intimidating for everyone. What makes it so difficult is knowing what to include, what not to, what to highlight, what not to. Human Resources professionals and hiring managers receive hundreds of resumes for any given position, and on average, they will spend about 10 to 30 seconds on yours."

Over the years, I've edited at least 500 resumes for construction workers, opera singers, registered nurses, electrical engineers, and event planners. Everyone was terrified. I convinced them all to feel the fear, and march forward anyway. I also told them that they were taking their resume far too seriously. I kid you not. For one thing, employers rarely invite you for an interview solely from stumbling across your career history on ladder.com or through snail mail. For another, by the time Human Resources directors ask you point blank for your resume, they're usually already seriously toying with the idea of hiring you.

So chill out, folks. Resumes are not the be-all and end-all of job hunting. On top of that, long-held beliefs about ways to set up resumes are more fallacy than fact. Take it from another website: www.dailywritingtips.com. "Many people write a resume as if the purpose of the document was to land a job. As a result, they end up with a really long and boring piece that makes them look like desperate job seekers. The objective of your resume is to land an interview, and the interview will land you the job – hopefully." Some ideas on creating the dreaded document:

Contact successful applicants. Before putting word one onto your computer screen, contact recently employed people and ask to see their resumes. While most individuals would view such a call as flattering, very few still-looking men and women actually go to the source of success for advice. Duh!

Customize your resume. Back in typewriter days, job hunters tended to send the same resume to every potential employer to avoid tedious retyping. Today, you should take advantage of your computer's ability to easily tailor documents for different recipients. A related hint: use as many words from recruiting ads as possible so the organization's or website's computer will pick up your application and spit it out for consideration.



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Ignore the one-page myth. If you have 10 or 15 years' background in a field, you'll be doing yourself a disservice by forcing every achievement onto a 8.5-by-11-inch paper or a single monitor screen. Contrary to popular perception, I've never heard of anyone tossing aside a resume because it spilled onto a second or even a third sheet of paper – or computer screen.

Include personal items. I'm well aware that most resume writers tell you to keep to yourself information such as your heading a Toastmaster's Club or playing a mean game of tennis. I say include those tidbits, which provide interviewers with insights into your character and energy.

Add a testimonial section. Forget about telling the reader that you'll provide references upon request. Put positive quotes from two or three former managers right on the resume. I once landed a position because, by including testimonials, I saved the employer the time and trouble involved in actually calling the individuals.

Show evidence of a logical mind. I find it amazing when I come across resumes with inconsistencies in tense, pronouns, even formatting – especially from technical professionals. How, I ask myself, can someone unable to match verb properties – a linear, mathematical, left-brain activity -- program a computer?

Use common sense. If a particular potential employer – such as the federal government – gives strict resume guidelines on its website, by all means follow them. While scanning your photograph onto a resume may be advantageous in the advertising field, doing the same with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security may backfire. Why? The federal government, among others, follows strict rules to prevent hiring discrimination; it routinely deletes pictures showing characteristics such as race, ethnicity or age. Now there's good news for job seekers on the wise side of 50.

Dr. Kathleen Begley has written seven books and gives corporate seminars on topics such as writing persuasively, presenting confidently, and managing positively. You can call her at 610-429-1562 or e-mail her at KBegley@writecompanyplus.com. She responds to everybody. If you feel you've become too busy to ever read this free, opt-in blogletter, please tell us to remove you from our mailing list. Although our feelings will be deeply hurt, we'll cheerfully delete you.