

Resume Writing Strategies

Presented by:
Cara Boese
HR, Recruitment Manager
Brock University

Objectives

- To learn effective techniques and strategies to capture the employer's attention.
- To understand how to write content for your cover letter and resume by communicating your skills and how you achieved business objectives
- To better prepare you for a competitive job market

Truths & Myths

There are clear rules for developing the perfect resume.

FALSE. There is no such thing as a perfect resume. You need to determine how to develop a strong marketing document that highlights your experience.

The purpose of the resume is to get a job.

FALSE. Resumes are an introduction of your skills and experience - its purpose is to get you an interview.

It is smart to copy words/language from the posting to use on your resume.

TRUE. Incorporate as much of the language from the posting as you can in order to demonstrate your fit for the job and organization.

Truths & Myths

Your resume should identify your job responsibilities for positions you held.

FALSE. Do more than restate the job description - create accomplishment statements that identify your achievements and contributions, and only highlight aspects of the job that are relevant to the employer.

When it comes to resumes, less is more.

TRUE. Simplicity is the key. Employers will spend 20-30 seconds reviewing your resume. Too much text can be overwhelming.

A cover letter is a sales pitch and a proposal for further action.

TRUE. The purpose of the cover letter is to encourage the employer to review your resume.

Truths & Myths

It is important to provide a record of every job you have held.

FALSE. Your resume is a marketing document, not a biography.

It is important to provide a list of references with your resume.

FALSE. Never include references with your initial application.

Using a template is a good idea.

FALSE. Common templates that can be downloaded online or through common Microsoft programs are not effective - it shows a lack of creativity and employers can spot them. Instead, use samples for ideas on how to display your information appropriately.

Understanding Your Skills

- Skills are developed and acquired through various activities and experiences: work, volunteer, extracurricular, etc.
- Recognizing the skills you have and how you have demonstrated them successfully will be the foundation for your cover letter and resume.
- Being able to effectively communicate your skills on your cover letter and resume takes time and practice.

Skills Employers Look For

- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Research
- Organization & Time Management
- Flexibility/Change Agent
- Decision Making/Good Judgment
- Technical
- Positive Attitude
- Interpersonal/ Teamwork
- Negotiation/Ability to Influence & Persuade
- Leadership
- Creativity/Innovation
- Critical Thinking
- Ability to Learn

Resume Writing-Basic Content

INCLUDE:

- Contact Information
- Education
- Computer & Technical Skills
- Work Experience
- Extracurricular Experience
- Volunteer Experience
- Awards and Scholarships
- Memberships/Associations
- Certifications

OMIT:

- Gender, Age, Marital Status
- Social Insurance Number
- An Objective Statement
- A List of References

Choosing a Format

Reverse Chronological

- Organize your experiences from most recent to least recent
- Highlight job titles, company names, and dates
- Include a few bullet points with each experience to describe your skills and contributions

JANE SMITH
32 Sample Drive, St Catharines, Ontario
L3H 4C7
(905) 646-8691
janesmith@hotmail.com

EDUCATION:
Honours Bachelor of Business Administration 2002 to Present
Brock University, St Catharines, Ontario

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Cashier Sept. 2003 to Dec. 2005
Home Hardware, St. Catharines, Ontario

- Assessed consumer demand and placed key merchandise in accessible locations at point of sale resulting in increased overall sales of 10%.
- Gained extensive product knowledge in order to provide complete information to prospective buyers and encourage product sales.
- Upheld strict company policies pertaining to returned merchandise to minimize revenue loss.
- Awarded "Cashier of the Month" twice, as a result of exceptional contribution and best overall performance within the business.
- Received numerous worker efficiency badges for accuracy in daily operations.

Cashier/Grocery Assistant Jun. 2000 to Sept. 2003
Fortinos, Guelph, Ontario

- Coordinated restocking and reorganizing of perishable goods by implementing a daily rotational system to minimize product and revenue loss.
- Assembled attractive merchandise displays in key traffic areas to entice customers and increase sales.
- Stocked grocery aisles and maintained rear stock rooms to ensure consistent accessibility of top selling merchandise to customers.
- Aided customers with item purchases, including cash register duties ensuring accurate exchange of revenue while eliminating transaction errors and cash loss.

EXTRA CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT:

Vice President, Operations May 2005 – May 2006
Business Students' Association – Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario

- Improved efficiency of inventory management procedures by 30% through the implementing a monthly tracking system.
- Ensured consistency in membership tracking by creating a spreadsheet database of annual student memberships.

COMPUTER SKILLS:

- Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Email and Internet

Personal Information

Incorrect

Carol Jones
346 Glen Ave.
St. Catherines, ON, L2S 3A1
(905) 680-5559
funnyface@email.com

Correct

Carol Jones
346 Glen Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2S 3A1
(905) 680-5559
carolj@email.com

- Check spelling and grammar carefully
- Use the full spelling of abbreviated terms
- Choose/create an appropriate email address

Education

Common Mistakes:

- Business
- BBA or BBE
- Bachelor of Business

Correct:

Honours Bachelor of Business Administration, Co-op
Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario

Honours Bachelor of Business Economics, Co-op
Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario

Computer & Technical Skills

This is where you emphasize your technical skills

- Proficient with MS Office; Word, Access, Excel & PowerPoint
- Familiar with Minitab & Maple
- Knowledge of Photoshop, Illustrator, & Visio
- Social Media/Web updating

It is still really important to have a technical skills section - employers are seeking individuals who are technological savvy.

If you speak a language other than English, title the Sub Heading Technical & Language Skills and include a bullet with second language

Work Experience

- Can have two Work Sections: Career Related Experience and Other Work Experience
- Career Related = any technical work experience in business
- Work Experience or Other Work Experience = all other employment
- Chronological order - most recent to least recent

Sample: Before & After

News Paper Delivery Assistant
XYZ Company, St. Catharines, Ontario

August 2009 - Present

Communications Co-ordinator
Region of Niagara, St. Catharines, Ontario

May - August 2009

Office Assistant
The Burke Group, St. Catharines, Ontario

May - August 2008

Accounting Assistant
BMG Landscaping Service, St. Catharines, Ontario

January - April 2008

Sample: Before & After

CAREER RELATED EXPERIENCE

Communications Co-ordinator
Region of Niagara, St. Catharines, Ontario

May - August 2009

Office Assistant
The Burke Group, St. Catharines, Ontario

May - August 2008

Accounting Assistant
BMG Landscaping Service, St. Catharines, Ontario

January - April 2008

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

News Paper Delivery Assistant
XYZ Company, St. Catharines, Ontario

August 2009 - Present

Work Experience: Techniques

- Use industry keywords and language
- Articulate your work experience based on business objectives
- What was your contribution, accomplishment, impact, or acquired learning?
- Result + Skill + Action bullets (70 %, listed first)
- Skill + Actions + Result (30%, listed after RSA bullets)

Sample: Poor, Better, Best

Poor:

- Advised customers on related products

Better:

- Provided information about products to customers, which resulted in sales

Best:

- Exceeded monthly sales targets by 20% by assessing customer needs and providing relevant IT product options

Sample: Poor, Better, Best

Poor:

- Stacked pool supplies in secure area

Better:

- Participated in, and documented annual inventory counts

Best:

- Reduced costs associated with seasonal merchandise by reviewing consumer purchasing activities and managing inventory accordingly

Use Action Words

- Each bullet point should begin with an action word (verb) - not responsible for, duties included etc.

Outcomes & Results

Some of the best outcomes and results are as follows:

- Increased/generated
- Decreased costs
- Improved operational efficiency
- Increased market share
- Decreased employee turnover
- Improved customer retention levels

Formula for Bullet Success

What business objective did this meet?
(to increase, decrease, expand, improve, etc)

+

What was your task? What did you do?

+

What was the outcome, result, achievement or acquired
learning?

(something that can be measured/evaluated)

=

A VALUE STATEMENT or ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENT

Sample: Before & After

Before:

Sales Associate / Key Holder

July 2006 - Present

Danier Leather, Niagara Falls, Ontario

- As a sales associate and key holder I have learned the importance of meeting personal and store sales goals, listening closely to each customer, asking the right questions, following store standards and wardrobing. I've also learned how extremely important customer service and organization is in the retail industry, especially when taking and following up on special orders, being an expert on our product and anticipating our customers' needs and wants.

Sample: Before & After

After:

Sales Associate / Key Holder

July 2006 - Present

Danier Leather, Niagara Falls, Ontario

- Exceeded monthly sales targets by 20% over a six month period by reorganizing merchandising displays
- Retained client base representing 25% of store sales by developing a follow up calling system
- Reduced inventory control issues by implementing a loss prevention program

Additional Content

- Volunteer Experience or Community Involvement
- Professional Memberships

References

References: “Available upon request”

- Place references on a separate page
- Include personal information at the top (copy from resume)

Provide three references:

- Work-related references are typically mandatory

References will include: Person's Name, Position Title,
Organization/Company, Phone Number

Make sure to ask your references for permission to use their name

Carol Jones
346 Glen Avenue, St. Catharines, Ontario L2S 3A1
(905) 680-5559
carolj@email.com

REFERENCES

Mr. John Taylor
Manager
Danier Leather
(905) 123-4567

Ms. Sue Ann Jones
HR Administrative Coordinator
The Burke Group
(905) 222-2222

Dr. John Smith
Assistant Professor
Brock University
(905)866-5550

Questions?