GUIDE TO CREATING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

for your job or internship search

Guide Overview

Resume: Its Purpose

-Not a list of everything you've accomplished but instead is a clear and concise marketing piece that highlights relevant skills, accomplishments, and experiences for the position or company for which you are applying.

-One tool that an employer will use to assess your candidacy and fit for the company and position.

-To provide a snapshot of your story that draws attention to the things you want to discuss in an interview or conversation with an employer.
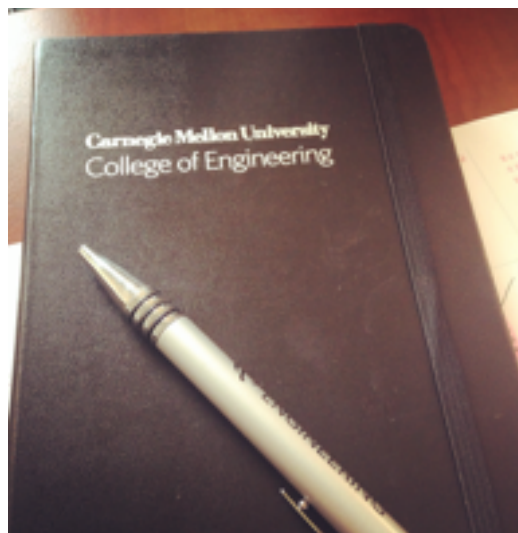
-It is not the one thing that gets you a job, but it is often your first introduction. The goal being to land an interview.

Introduction

This guide addresses the most common questions asked by CMU-SV students about resumes. The goal is to help you develop a clearer understanding of how to craft an **impactful** resume. Keep in mind, your resume is just one piece of a multifaceted and comprehensive job or internship search. It is **not** the one thing that will lead to your success. Instead, it is meant to provide a snapshot of your professional story. Additionally, interviewing, your online presence, building professional relationships, etc. each play a significant role in the search process. If you are looking for a step-by-step guide on developing your resume from scratch, please refer to the step-by-step resume guide created by CMU's Career and Professional Development Center.

Make Sure Your Resume Gets Past the "Robot"

Most large employers (Google, Facebook, Cisco, LinkedIn, etc.), and now many small and mid-size companies, use what is known as an Applicant Tracking System. These systems are designed to "weed" out applicants that aren't a match and also to help recruiters find candidates that may be a fit for a specific position or company. To get past the Applicant Tracking System and make it to the recruiter or hiring team, students need to identify the keywords and skills listed in the job description and provide a focused snapshot of their story. These systems are so savvy they not only track for specific words but also the context, so make sure you are clear in describing not only what you did but also the impact, results and achievements of the action. If you apply online there's a good chance a system is screening for keywords and context, so be aware of this, read the job posting thoroughly, and match your resume to that specific posting. If submitting your resume to a general dropbox, then be sure your resume is focused and reflects your skills, knowledge, and interests.

Writing a Resume That Stands out to Employers

The question we are asked most often is, "how do I make my resume stand out?" So we think the response deserves its own section. Whether you are bringing your resume to a career fair, applying online, or sending it via email, there is no magical formula to this answer. Why? Because it is a very subjective process and depends on the person viewing it and their opinions. If we were to line up 20 recruiters and hiring managers and asked them this question, each might have a different answer because what stands out to one person may not to another. What this means for a job or internship seeker is that there is not just one way to write your resume. Not just one format that will land you an interview. Not just one magical statement that will make the employer come crawling. There are, however, a combination of things you can do to ensure your resume has an impact on its viewer.

These 4 Resume Writing steps were developed using feedback from recruiting professionals to help students create a resume that will capture the employer's attention.

1. Know what the employer is looking for in a candidate and why. Read the job description thoroughly, talk to people who work for the company, read about the company online. Do your research!

2. Determine your value proposition. Once you know what the employer is looking for, describe your skills, knowledge, and abilities, that meet the position requirements. Then describe how you successfully achieved results.

3. Include results-statements and skills in the order the employer is looking for. Most employers take 30-60 seconds to scan your resume, so include the most important things first.

4. Reflect on other skills, qualities, achievements, and experiences you want to highlight. Many students feel they need to omit seemingly unrelated experiences from their resume, but if the skills you developed in these experience add impact and distinguish you from other candidates, this can be especially beneficial.

5. Edit, edit, edit. Once your story is clear, check over for keywords, context, and spelling and grammar.

Show Don't Tell

Remember. Your resume is a marketing tool and should show the employer why you are the best fit for a position and company. One way to make your resume more impactful is to use results-oriented *Show Me Statements* instead of *Tell Me Statements*. Here's the difference between the two:

Show Me Statements:
-Why the what and how of your experiences are important.
-Describe the benefits of certain actions or responsibilities.
-Include your results and achievements.
-Outline how what you did benefited the project, team, stakeholders, company, school, department, etc.

Tell Me Statements (to be avoided):
-What you did but not how you did it, why you did it, or the impact it had on the organization, project, team, stakeholders, etc.
-List activities and responsibilities but don't show any depth.
-Describe features that don't relate to any accomplishment or result.
-The focus is on the details of your tasks and projects instead of outcomes.

Reflection Exercise

1. List one accomplishment from a project or work experience:
_____
_____

2. What challenges did you experience when performing this and what did you do to get beyond it?
_____
_____
_____

3. What changed or improved when you completed the role:
_____
_____

4. What did you gain from this personally (skills, learning outcomes, knowledge,etc.) that may transfer to another opportunity?
_____
_____
_____

Try this reflection exercise for each of your professional and personal accomplishments to better understand your value proposition.

Examples

Tell Me Statement:

Gathered and analyzed customer feedback.

Show Me Statement:

Gathered customer feedback to determine technical / business requirements and translated findings into reports on functional specifications for engineering team.

Show Me Statements show Action, Context, and Results (ACR). A good exercise to complete when crafting your resume is to use the ACR format for each statement. If you need help coming up with good verbs, take a look at CPDC's Action Verbs document.

List the ACTION word: _____

Provide CONTEXT: _____
_____
_____
_____

Show the RESULTS: _____
_____
_____
_____

Resume Basics

-1 page for 10 years of professional experience or less

-format is easy to scan, margins are consistent, and font is easy to read and uniform (ex:Times, Arial, Calibri)

-section headers are easy to spot

-clear and concise writing style

-each bullet-point begins with an action word, highlights the result or achievement, and quantifies when possible

-does not include personal information like birth date, marital status, height/weight, a picture, SSN, passport info

-does not say "references available upon request"

-uses **bold**, *italics*, and underline to add emphasis but not overused

Other FAQs About Resumes

1.Do I list everything I've ever done?

No. As we've discussed in this guide, effective resumes highlight key accomplishments, skills, and experiences that relate to the position and demonstrate to employers your value proposition.

2.Do I include my G.P.A.? Typically included if it's above a 3.0 or meets or exceeds the employer's requirement.

3. Is a CV the same thing as a resume?

No. A curriculum vitae, also called a CV, is a document that gives extensive information on the applicant's background whereas a resume should be limited to 1-2 pages. A CV is used most often by PhD students who are applying for positions in academia or research positions in industry. For master's degree students, a resume is more appropriate than a CV.

4.Do I include hobbies, personal interests, or additional accomplishments?

This one is up to you! Many recruiters love seeing this on resumes because it adds more to a candidate's story. Like we mentioned earlier in the guide, there are many differing opinions on this and no rules that say whether or not you should include these points. If you have hobbies, interests, or additional accomplishments that mean a lot to you, then it would be great to include these on your resume. That said, don't simply list them, but demonstrate why they have meaning.

Other Helpful Resources

Action Verbs, Sample Resumes

Carnegie Mellon University
Silicon Valley