



Carnegie Resources, Inc.

821 Baxter Street, Suite 306

Charlotte, 28202

tel 704.375.7701

fax 704.375.7727



Supercharge Your Resume

Preparing your resume and avoiding common resume blunders

HOW TO SUPERCHARGE YOUR RESUME You Never Have A Second Chance To Make A First Impression

1. TOO FOCUSED ON JOB DUTIES

Your resume should not be a boring listing of job duties and responsibilities. Go beyond showing what was required and demonstrate how you made a difference at each company, providing specific examples. When developing your achievements, ask yourself: How did you perform the job better than others? What were the problems or challenges faced? How did you overcome them? What were the results? How did the company benefit from your performance? Did you receive any awards, special recognition or promotions as a result?

2. FLOWERY OR GENERAL OBJECTIVE STATEMENT

Many candidates lose their readers in the beginning. Statements like 'A challenging position enabling me to contribute to organizational goals while offering an opportunity for growth and advancement' are overused, too general and waste the reader's time. If you're on a career track, replace the objective with a tag line stating what you do or your expertise.

3. TOO SHORT OR TOO LONG

Many people try to squeeze their experiences onto one page, because they've heard resumes shouldn't be longer. By doing this, job seekers may delete impressive achievements. There are also candidates who ramble on about irrelevant or redundant experiences. There is no rule about appropriate resume length. When writing your resume, ask yourself, 'Will this statement help me land an interview?' Every word should sell you, so only include information that elicits a 'yes'.

4. USING PERSONAL PRONOUNS AND ARTICLES

A resume is a form of business communication, so it should be concise and written in a telegraphic style. There should be no mentions of 'I' or 'me', and only minimal use of articles. For example:

I developed a new product that added \$2 million in sales and increased the market segment's gross margin by 12 percent. should be changed to:

Developed new product that added \$2 million in sales and increased market segment's gross margin by 12 percent.

5. LISTING IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

Many people include their interests, but they should only include those relating to the job. For example, if a candidate is applying for a position as a ski instructor, he can list cross-country skiing as a hobby.

Personal information, such as date of birth, marital status, height and weight is illegal and should not be on the resume unless you're a job seeker residing outside the US.

6. USING A FUNCTIONAL RESUME WHEN YOU HAVE A GOOD CAREER HISTORY

It is irksome for hiring managers not to see the career progression and the impact made at each position. Unless you have an emergency situation, such as virtually no work history or excessive job-hopping, avoid the functional format.

The modified chronological format is the most effective. Here's the basic layout:



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Header (name, address, email address, phone number).

Lead with a strong profile section detailing the scope of your experience and areas of proficiency.

Reverse chronological employment history emphasizing achievements in the past 10 to 15 years.

Education (New grads may put this at the top).

7. TYPOS

One typo can land your resume in the garbage. Proofread and show your resume to several friends to have them proofread it as well. This document is a reflection of you and should be grammatically correct.

Get Jail Time For This Resume Lie?

The newest trend in resume writing is to lie. We're not talking about a slight exaggeration here and there. We're talking outright lies told very convincingly, especially about academic degrees that were never earned. To pull this off, some unscrupulous candidates frustrated by a difficult and uncertain job market, have gone so far as to provide their prospective bosses with toll-free telephone numbers that are answered by Web site operators who "verify" the academic qualifications listed on the resume, reports Reuters. Others have actually hacked into university Web sites to add their names to the list of graduates. But before you decide to embellish your background with out and out lies that you have rigged to be "verified" as if they were the truth, know this: You could be committing a felony. Get caught and convicted, and it could land you in jail. And that's not all. If you claim to have an academic degree you didn't earn and it leads to higher pay, you could be accused of criminal fraud by your employer--even if this is discovered years later. Think only a handful of people are doing this? You may be surprised. Reuters reports that the background search firm ADP Screening and Selection Services, found that more than 50 percent of the people on whom it conducted employment and education checks in 2003 had submitted false information, compared with about 40 percent in 2002. Companies are fighting back. Their best weapon against fraudulent resumes is a more thorough background check of candidates and even long-time employees. This includes not only references, but also criminal checks. If you're job-hunting, you will likely have to prove you really did earn your degree. Expect to be asked to have an official transcript of your grades sent by your alma mater directly to the prospective employer--without going to you first.

The Top 5 Resume Lies

A whopping 25 percent of resumes contain a lie, and the No. 1 fib is about employment dates. Other popular falsifications concern academic dates, previous positions, academic qualifications and undeclared directorships. That's the word from the British Risk Advisory Group which studied 3,000 resumes for finance positions. Perhaps the most alarming finding of the poll is that job candidates are increasingly likely to lie. On average, a resume will have three pieces of misleading information on it. "These results are a warning to employers of taking too much at face value when hiring people," Risk Advisory Group deputy director Richard Prior told the BBC. While anyone could innocently make a mistake on his or her resume, three mistakes are unlikely and indicate someone is tell bold-faced lies.

How do people lie on resumes?

* They may have earned a degree, but list it as being from a prestigious school they didn't attend or indicate they have a degree they didn't earn from a school they only attended briefly. * Making up a fancy job title to make a previous position sound more important is also common, as is lying about a previous salary. (Do note that both are very easy for a prospective employer to confirm.) * Another popular lie is to say you were laid off or quit when in fact you were singled out for bad performance or were fired. * People also inflate legitimate accomplishments to make them sound more important or interesting. That's one lie you might actually get away with since it's difficult for a prospective employer to verify your on-the-job successes and failures.