

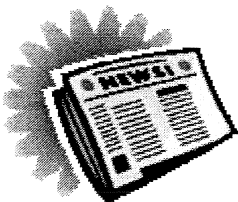
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Resources Newsletters Relocation Press Releases About Us

- Home
- Search Jobs
- Post Resume
- My Resume
- EXPERTease
- A to Z Guide
- e-Vita
- Max's Help

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April, 2000 - In This Issue...

- **The Resume is Dead... Long Live the Digital Portfolio!**
By Randy Howard
- **Don't Be A Drag At the Career Fair!** By Kim Little
- **Navigating the Sunday Classifieds** By Randy Howard
- **Insider Hints for the New Grad** By Wayne M. Gonyea
- **Resume 54, Where Are You?** By Randy Howard

The Resume is Dead... Long Live the Digital Portfolio! By Randy Howard

In the year 1900, drafting a letter to a potential employer required a fountain pen and stylish penmanship. If you were granted an interview, you hitched up a horse and buggy and - heeah! - you were on your way. It's the year 2000, and we are now living in the "Digital Age." The majority of business correspondences are sent via e-mail. Instead of "saddling up" for an interview, we buckle ourselves into climate-controlled sport utility vehicles. What a difference a century makes.

While no one can predict the extent to which the ubiquitous Information Highway will altar the course of business, it is clear the playing field of the professional job search has already been "virtually" stream-lined. Thanks to the Internet, information is disseminated from job-seekers to employers, recruiters and human resource managers in a much quicker fashion. Subsequently, the traditional components of the job search are now just beginning to feel the shockwaves caused by this "electronic" revolution.

A prime example of how the Internet has changed the job search is its profound effect on the traditional resume.

The resume (or curriculum vitae) has long been a vital part of the professional job search. Coupled with the cover letter, it is often the first statement you make about yourself to the hiring agent. Depending on which "expert" you consult, the objectives of a resume are to chronicle work experience, education and skill sets, clearly yet persuasively. This allows a prospective employer to make an informed hiring decision. Generally speaking, the best resumes get the interviews, and the best interviewers get the job.

(Get ready to unlearn everything you know about the value of a resume).

According to one industry expert, the traditional resume is quickly on its way to becoming extinct. (This includes the original copies, printed on bond paper, directly from an ink-jet printer.) The resume as we know it will no longer be the exclusive means of catching the eye of the human resource manager.

If job-seekers really want to make an impression on a potential employer, they must be prepared to go beyond the traditional resume and build their own professional portfolios.

Before "false prophet" accusations start getting hurled about, consider just a few of the built-in shortcomings of the traditional resume:

- Resumes, as we know them, are two dimensional and dull to the reader. Imagine a stack of 200 resumes sitting on the corner of the hiring manager's desk. What "process of elimination" games will they have to invent to wade through that pile until it becomes manageable? Once they've narrowed this pile down, how many "action verbs" does it take to impress them?
- Resumes fail to adequately demonstrate artistic or technical ability. Indeed, it may be an extraordinary feat that you developed software for an XYZ application. But how can you illustrate the integrity of your work if the hiring manager can't actually see it?

This leads us to the next point, which is common knowledge yet rarely talked about in professional employment industry circles:

- Resumes may contain exaggerations and/or mistruths about a candidate's skill sets, experience or accomplishments. Perhaps this could be fodder for a future employment-related article: "In a recent poll conducted anonymously by John Doe Marketing and Associates, blankety-blank percent of the professional workforce replied 'yes' when asked if they believe embellishing information on their resumes helped them earn their present positions."

In as much as the outhouse was an important invention credited with maintaining domestic harmony 150 years ago, it was ultimately replaced by indoor plumbing (in a select few homes, the wealthy enjoyed the bidet). The point is, the old ways of doing things eventually make way for the new (and often) better ways of doing things.

A digital portfolio provides recruiters a more sophisticated medium in which to market their candidates. Whether it be highlighting the most memorable career accomplishments for presentation, illustrating specifically what the candidate can do for an organization, providing real-world examples, or showcasing innovative projects and original ideas, the digital portfolio provides greater detail than a traditional, paper resume.

When considering the recent technological trends of rapid software upgrades, personal web-pages, and a shift towards information being relayed on multi-media platforms, it is apparent the digital portfolio is the logical next step for staying competitive in the workplace. For the candidate still sending their resume by "snail mail," the alternatives for remaining competitive are plain and simple: tarry in the pre-Internet dark ages when everything was paper-based, or start sending out your digital portfolio.

[Top of Article](#)

[In This Issue...](#)
