Five Ways to Improve Your Resume

You are so good at what you do, so special in many ways, and have unique capabilities to offer—yet, your resume doesn't give us a clue.

- You CAN drive your advantages and persona through your resume
- You CAN give your reader a sense of you in action benefiting your team and meeting goals
- You CAN convey momentum and energy
- You CAN inspire your reader to see you succeeding in the position

But first, let's answer basic questions about resumes

Your Name and Contact Information

- YES to your name, phone, personal email, and LinkedIn URL
- YES to San Francisco Bay Area Resident included if you have a non-local area code and current employment that is out of the area
- NO to your street address, company email, birth date, driver license, social security number, immigration status, place of birth, and citizenship
- NO to placing your contact information in a header or footer. It will likely vanish during digital scanning
- NO to placing anything before your name. Robots are less than competent. They may interpret the first element they encounter as your name

Graphics including Photos and Embellishments

- NO to text boxes and shapes because they will likely disappear during digital scanning
- NO to columns because the orderly sequence you set up is likely to get badly re-arranged
- YES to tables if you save your resume to plain text format and use this format (.txt) to enter information into dialogue boxes when applying online. Tables convert to lists in .txt format. Prevent words running together by placing a space following each line on a table
- NO to extreme fonts and italics. Robots may misread all but the simplest elements. NO, also to head shots, page borders, and added embellishments

1-2-3 page resumes?

- One to three pages is fine. If you exceed 3 pages, consider using one or more appended pages that cover capabilities, achievements, project descriptions, and write-ups headlined "Ask me about," "How we did it," or add a bio. Unloading information from your resume will shorten it
- At entry level, a one-page resume can be appropriate. At mid-career, applicants have earned their second page and more. Very senior people, may consider a one page summary resume or introduction to their more comprehensive resume

Experience Gap

Yes, briefly explain it. Avoid having a recruiter pass over your resume passed because your gap raised questions. See example below about presenting a gap in experience in your resume:

Employer Organization, City, 2018–2000	**Typical way of showing an experience entry**
Administrative Assistant	
Job description content goes here	

Time Away from Career, City, 2016–2018	**Gap example**
Personal Time	

During my time away from my career I _____
Raised my family
Cared for an aging or ill family member
Completed further education
Began an entrepreneurial venture
Broadened my vistas by traveling and working abroad
Pursued a long-held dream to write a novel

> Note: Include the value you gained during the time away—education / training, new perspectives, leadership skills—that strengthens your qualifications.

Prepare your resume for the hurdles of its journey

Hurdle 1	First look: 3-6 seconds to capture attention initially
Hurdle 2	Recruiters and HR: Need best match to specifications. Key words are critical
Hurdle 3	Hiring managers: Given 2 to 5 qualified candidates, they will choose the one they like

Five Tips to Improve Your Resume

Tip 1	*Use visual layout to your advantage*

You may need to change your perspective from "How can I bring all my information into a concise, powerful resume" to "How can I best present my information to be more relevant to job postings?" (Think: What is the value you offer? What can you do for them?)

Use visually obvious section headings and subheadings. Display the most important information first within the major sections (capabilities, education, experience).

Within the experience section, your most recent position is typically the most relevant and its description is longer than others. Consider reducing attention from less relevant, earlier experience entries by grouping these jobs in a "Previous Experience" section and shortening these descriptions.

Tip 2	*Improve your relevance to the job requirements. Include terminology used in the job postings to improve your key word matching*

Step 1 Review online job postings in your preferred job category

Step 2 Observe and analyze postings. Test your assumptions. This is a discovery process. Is your category actually two categories? Does the level fit? Do your capabilities match? How confident are you of matching the "hard" requirements? Do some postings signal another category or sub-category?

Step 3 Print 12-20 of the most complete postings in your priority job category

Step 4 Highlight the most important words and phrases. Enter them into your computer to create your keyword list. Use these terms and phrases in your resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn

Claim your job category with headlines and subheads. Don't expect your reader to guess where you fit. Announce your target job category. You can do this by industry, function, sub-function, achievement level, results produced, entry-middle-seasoned- or executive career status. All content in your resume needs to reinforce your job category claim. Examples:

Functional Emphasis

ADMINISTRATION   OFFICE   ACCOUNTING   HUMAN RESOURCES

Title and Level Emphasis

T A K E - C H A R G E   M A N A G E R | P R O J E C T   C O O R D I N A T O R
High-End Retail   Personal Image Styling   Client Service   Promotion/Events

Results Emphasis

MOVING POTENTIAL FORWARD   POSSIBILITIES   PEOPLE   ORGANIZATIONS   FUTURES

Making a Difference Emphasis

FINANCE/ACCOUNTING MANAGEMENT
Turnaround/Best Practices   Next Level Initiatives   Financial Visibility for Growth/Profitability

Capture your reader's attention in the first third of your resume. Aim for instantaneous capture of your reader's attention. You have 3-6 seconds to pull in your reader. Use headlines and short phrases. Strive for points that are relevant and specific. Capabilities listed in a table format communicate faster than narrative text.

Do not list attributes in a 3-5 line paragraph introduction.

1. A paragraph cannot be read in 3 to 6 seconds
2. Listing your 8 to 12 best attributes in a paragraph, and editing them wrings out all the juice, and your attributes and capabilities lose their punch
3. The stale presentation will not differentiate you from anyone else

4. You have not yet established enough interest in your reader and you have not yet supplied context that gives the content credibility or allows it to stick
5. Not a stellar idea to put lists in narrative form
6. Your soft skills especially will not resonate, for example: proactive, results oriented, etc.

Tip 3   *Experience section: Engage your reader. Keep their attention*

Impress us with your present/past workplaces. Introduce each employment with an overview sentence that creates suspense and interest. Your overview statement anchors your reader, acts as a bridge to your bullet points, and helps your reader interpret the information that follows.

Example 1   Supervised opening of the San Diego store. Introduced the brand in a market where it was not known

Example 2   Managed business matters for a group of entertainment industry clients, including producers, directors, and actors. Was promoted three levels above entry position in three and a half years. Commended by clients and management for thoroughness, attention to detail, and high accuracy

Example 3   Directed operations as Head of the Floor Department for the largest theater on the West Coast with 25 screens and as many as 17,000 guests on a peak day. Started as a staff member and received frequent promotions

Impress your readers with information about the company—its products, marketplace, and geographic scope. What was the company's/your department's priority? What changes was the company making (launching new products or markets, acquiring another company, downsizing and reorganizing)? Emphasize the company's distinctions, leadership, and claims to fame along with your role in helping achieve initiatives. When you elevate the stature of a company you worked for, you also elevate yourself. Guide your reader to seeing you in action in the context of meeting missions or major goals.

Tip 4   *Place yourself in the center of the action. Bring your bullet points to life*

Emphasize challenges met in your bullet points. Begin statements with verbs. Replace "responsible for" statements with an achievement. Try the WHAT-HOW syntax by starting your bullet points with an accomplishment (what) followed by how you did it. Example: Led implementation of a policy initiative for the staff of 24 by organizing small group training sessions.

The two "CMs," "challenges met" and "changes made" will compel interest and impress your reader:

Challenges met terms: Overcame, turned around, drove, led, initiated
Changes made terms: Established, changed, converted, transformed, improved, broke through

Recast your past to fit your job target. Delete items that are no longer relevant. In addition, examine experience listings and re-express job descriptions and bullets by substituting terms from the job postings you are currently targeting. Example:

From: Handled front desk duties and provided backup support for the office manager including preparing staff announcements

To: Set a professional tone as the client/guest-facing representative. Prepared clear, concise announcements and email communications for staff members

| Tip 5 | *Assert your career persona. Add mystique and charisma* |

Drive your personality through the lines of your resume.
A statement near the top of your resume can capture the essence of your capabilities and career commitment. A few words can reveal a characteristic associated with your work persona and accomplishments. Clues for identifying your persona statement may be pulled from performance reviews, awards, distinctions, times when you met challenges, and moments of job satisfaction. Lead-in terms could be: Dedicated to, commended for, known for, known as, excel in, always.
Examples:

A dedicated professional with more than 20 years' experience in creative, service, and leadership positions

A proven business analyst and cross-functional manager with strengths in IT and client relations

A goal-driven, quick learner with the talent, tenacity, and will to succeed

Eager to take on challenges and make a difference

Always proactive in finding better ways

Consistently strive to exceed expectations

Be the hero or heroine of your resume. Share your accolades. Two approaches can work:

1. Introduce mystique and charisma into your resume. Build accolades into your experience descriptions/bullets. Put appropriate words in each source's mouth that you believe they would be comfortable in stating about you.

   Recognized as   Designated as   Go-to person for   Selected to _____

2. Use one-cell wrap-around tables for mini-testimonials (unattributed).

   From a customer   From a supplier   From a co-worker   From a supervisor

| Bonus Tip | *Test your resume and keep current with technology tools* |

Word Cloud	www.wordclouds.com Word frequency count is useful
Online searches	Search on Resume Parsing and Applicant Tracking Systems
YouTube videos: Applicant Tracking Systems	Understanding Applicant Tracking Systems, Jon Ciampi https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVvaECOmSS4&t=6s
	How to Beat with Applicant Tracking Systems with Jobscan https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVhIuFYDacE&t=12s
	8 secrets to Writing Your Resume for the ATS and Landing the Interview, Don Georgevich https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG_kC5Iwo5M
Ex-Recruiters/HR pros now taking the applicant's side (blogs and articles)	Liz Ryan, www.humanworkplace.com
	Nick Corcodilos, www.asktheheadhunter.com
	John Tarnoff, www.johntarnoff.com
Resume workshops	https://www.meetup.com/Resume-Workshops-San-Francisco-Oakland-East-Bay/
Delta Strategies FAQs	https://deltastrategies.com/?page_id=467
Online matching test: Resume and job posting	www.jobscan.co (Note: .co, not .com). Sign up for mailings
Company insider information	www.glassdoor.com
Salary information	www.salaries.com
Test result after uploading resume	www.indeed.com Note: Click on "Edit" after uploading to see how your resume appears after scanning. Make adjustments