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Resume Secret #10

Sell Your Skills—and Yourself



Every hiring manager is looking for someone with skill, savvy and style. They want individuals, not clones. So don't be afraid to be yourself and to 'sell' what you have to offer. In other words, state your abilities clearly and let your light shine. You may be the very one to illuminate the company in a new way.

For example, suppose you are an excellent manager by nature. Be sure to mention how you have trained, coordinated and inspired employees to do a better job in a shorter amount of time, thereby expanding the reputation and the income of your organization.

You may wish to write down five of your strong points and give examples of how you displayed them on the job.

If You Don't Speak Up About Your Abilities, Who Will?

Communication: I hired and personally trained three employees to take over new sales territories in the Southern States. I traveled with each one, met their constituents, observed their presentation skills and critiqued them when we returned to headquarters. All three have broken sales records in the first year.

Organization: I helped the office staff completely reorganize the front office: streamlining files, replacing paper documents with computer records, purging client paper files of ten years and older and moving their contact information to the computer. This effort made more working space for each employee and allowed for a good cleaning, as well.

Inspiration: I led a series of motivational training sessions for all employees, encouraging them to pursue individual goals in the office, participating in company leisure activities such as softball, bowling, and a reading club, which has reinforced 'team' playing and curtailed turnover.

Details Count... So Make Them Shine!

A resume is a perfect vehicle for displaying your skills and on-the-job strengths. Show what you have to offer that will benefit the company—not only financially, but in the area of human interest and personal effectiveness on the job, as well. Review the examples above and you'll soon see an increase in your own results—in the form of job offers from the hiring managers you're most interested in targeting.



Resume Secret #9

Bridge Those Trouble Spots



If you have one or more gaps in your resume, it's a good idea to build a bridge from one professional experience to the next—not with fibs or lies, but with the truth.

For example, suppose you worked as an administrative assistant from 2002-2008. But, from 1999 'til 2002, you were unemployed because you were ill or had a baby or took time off to help your spouse launch a business. Whatever your reason, you may wonder what to put on the resume so the gap won't work against you.

What you can do

List the actions you took during your 'employment break' right along with your work experiences. This approach will actually work in your favor, because it shows you as a well-rounded person who uses your time productively and, in some cases, unselfishly—especially if you helped a family member or volunteered for a needy cause. By approaching your employment gap honestly, you also show your integrity. You'll build a trustworthy image and assure the hiring manager you're someone who is balanced and compassionate.

Here's an example of some bridge builders:

1998-2001 Real Estate Office Manager, ABC Real Estate Company,
Oakbrook, IL

Stayed home to take care of aging parent. Did some freelance real-estate work, as time permitted.

OR

1998-2001 Executive Assistant, Liberty Manufacturing, Inc.,
Austin, TX

Volunteered for Senator Paul Gladstone's re-election campaign and finished work on Master's degree in Business Management.

OR

2002-2003 Medical Office Administrator, Family Physicians Group,
Austin, TX

Recovered from broken leg and repair surgery. During this time, did volunteer blogging for a non-profit health organization in Austin.

When it comes to your resume, bridge the work gap with the truth and watch it carry you over to the other side—right back into the work force—or maybe even into the job of your dreams.



Resume Secret #8

The Impact of Power-Packed Words!



Looking for a new job? Start with a GREAT resume.

Here's what it takes...

Pack your resume with words that spell P-O-W-E-R! Consider the list on the left. Then compare with the list on the right. Which words speak to you?

Started
Made
Finished
Did
Sent
Helped

Initiated
Created
Completed
Handled
Delivered
Delegated

What a difference a single word makes! Weak words, like those in the left column, lack energy and vibrancy. Power words, such as those on the right, pack a wallop! They tell a hiring manager you're a person who will take charge, meet deadlines, work well with others and take responsibility for assigned tasks.

List your previous employment opportunities, including specifics about the job you held, using power-packed words to convey the details.

For example:

Mayfield Enterprises, Mayfield, USA 2005-2007

Assistant Production Manager

Initiated a new software program for the field-based sales force, delegated several individuals to use it and report back; created a file to contain the results and completed all testing by the assigned deadline.

Now compare the previous description with the following:

Mayfield Enterprises, Mayfield, USA 2005-2007

Assistant Production Manager

I came up with an idea for a new software program to try with the sales force while they are out in the field taking orders and then calling them in for the order department to fill. I asked certain people to try this program and then come back to me with their results so I could put them in a special folder. It was important to do this in order for me to finish everything on time, since I had a deadline that I was expected to keep.

That kind of writing belongs on the nightstand. Perfect bedtime reading. It would put a hiring manager—even one with long-term insomnia—to sleep before he got through the first sentence.

Remember: Less is more.

The second description took more than twice as many words as the first (89 vs. 34) to convey the same information. And those 89 words were cumbersome and boring. A few well-placed, powerful words carry a greater impact than a dull, tired paragraph that drones on and on.



Resume Secret #7

Precise and Concise... That's Nice!



Preparing a resume can be a daunting task; in fact, it can feel positively *overwhelming*. You may worry that your professional vocabulary is limited, your sentence structure is wobbly and your punctuation skills are weak.

Don't worry. You can always seek help with those basics.

But there is something only you can do: List the solid, essential elements of your skills and experience on your resume in a clear, concise manner... so hiring managers will read it all the way through the first time, then take a second look—and maybe even a third.

Here's what to do:



Position your name and contact information flush left. Include phone numbers and e-mail address.



State your objective simply and clearly: A position as a Clothing Store Manager.



Write a short summary of your qualifications: Good communicator and leader, friendly personality, knowledgeable about the clothing industry, organized and goal oriented. Note the clear, simple wording.



List your two most recent jobs, their start and end dates, name of company or organization, city and state. Write one or two short sentences describing your responsibilities.

Example: As assistant store manager, my responsibilities included monitoring inventory, conducting new employee training and assisting the store manager with day-to-day operations and staffing.



State your training or education, such as community college or trade school; include the city and state and the date you completed your studies.



List any awards or recognition you received, the name of the organization that honored you and the date.

Example: Retail Professionals of America, Community Service Award, May 2004.

Remember: Precise is Nice!

Hiring managers receive a huge volume of resumes each day. The pile from one day may spill into the next and so the stack grows. He or she has only a few seconds to glance at each resume and make a decision: STASH (for later) or TRASH (for good).

If you want yours to go into the STASH pile for a second viewing, follow the proven suggestions above. Use friendly, clear language that briefly describes your experience and qualifications.

Then send it off and relax. You've done your part. Now it's up to the hiring manager.

You can be assured a well-written resume—that goes to the heart of what the hiring manager is seeking in a candidate—will attract attention and result in that special phone call or e-mail that says, “I liked your clear and precise resume. Let's meet for an interview.”



Resume Secret #6

Take Action by Using Action Verbs!



The right words on your resume can propel a hiring manager to the phone to contact you for a job interview. The key? Action verbs.

Many job seekers write a whole paragraph when a sentence will do; explain their work experience in excruciating detail when a simple phrase can convey the point; and describe their entire background when a short, bulleted list would suffice. For example:

I have spent the last seven years developing and executing a plan of action that included holding communication classes for new employees, making sure they are onboard with the company's policy, based on my ability to bring more clarity to management's relationship with foreign partners and also helping middle and upper management get along better.

That kind of writing will land even the most well-qualified candidate's resume in the shredder. But that fate needn't befall your resume. You can rise to the top of the job-hunting crowd by using this secret tool: *action verbs*.

Here are three examples of how to make your words work for you:

Education and Training:

- Earned a Master of Business Communication from South Texas University.
- Served a one-year apprenticeship at Lawton Business Institute.

Specific Duties:

- Led communication classes for all new employees...
- Created a manual and conducted training on business ethics and integrity.

Key Accomplishments:

- Created new marketing channels for our South American partner.
- Revitalized communication between upper and middle management.

Spur the prospective employer to action. Inspire the hiring manager to call *you* for a job interview by using the small but mighty tool of *action verbs*—the sparkling verbal gems that show what you’ve done in the past and how you can perform *now* for your target company.

Avoid long, wordy paragraphs filled with gobbledygook. Slash through the fluff and get right to the point—by demonstrating what you’ve accomplished and what you’re capable of achieving now.

Transform your existing resume from ordinary to outstanding by selecting key words from this list of powerful action verbs:

Create (Created)	Provide (Provided)
Restructure (Restructured)	Manage (Managed)
Lead (Led)	Resolve (Resolved)
Change (Changed)	Increase (Increased)
Commandeer (Commandeered)	Place (Placed)
Direct (Directed)	Serve (Served)
Implement (Implemented)	Coordinate (Coordinated)

Sit down today and create your brand-new resume—one that inspires confidence, clarity and a commitment to calling you for an interview that could lead to the job you’ve always dreamed of.



Resume Secret #5

Volunteering Adds Value



Many job seekers ask whether they should include volunteer work on their resumes when seeking new employment. That's certainly a question worth looking at.

Some employers are interested in seeing only the nuts-and-bolts details that show the what and where of your employment history. Others want to see what you do in your spare time. We're not referring here to a round of golf on Saturday morning, but what you do for the community as a volunteer.

Perhaps you donate a few hours each week to a homeless shelter for men or you're part of a literacy program for immigrants or you provide meals for the elderly.

This is important because it demonstrates community involvement and an excellent sense of civic mindedness. But be sure to put volunteer activity in its proper place.

List your previous employment first—over the last ten or so years.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:

2000-2007 Assistant Sales Director, Acme Manufacturing, Inc.
Austin, TX. In charge of training, observing, and communicating with new sales people.

American University, Earned an M.A. in Sales and Marketing

Then create a spot on your resume for whatever volunteer work you've done or are now doing. For example:

VOLUNTEER WORK:

2000-2004 Led nature hikes for local Boys' Club. Organized annual barbecue to raise funds for the organization.

2004-2008 Assistant director of annual Thank-you Picnic For Seniors. Here the community acknowledges our elderly citizens for their contributions of time, wisdom and volunteer hours to our citizens.

When you are called for an interview and the hiring manager asks for details about your resume, you'll be free to talk more fully about your volunteer work. You can show the hiring manager how employees' community-service contributions enhance the company's credibility with residents; employee volunteerism doubles as a form of publicity for the organization's products and services.

When it comes to your resume, don't be hesitant to show the full spectrum of your experience—from paid work to volunteer service. Hiring managers are more likely to consider you for the position they need to fill when they see you're not only skilled, but generous with your time and committed to your community; in addition, you've demonstrated an innate ability to balance career and community involvement. Now, who wouldn't want to hire such a capable, socially minded employee?



Resume Secret #4

Top Ten Traits of Superior Employees



Are you in the market for a great new job?

Then consider what employers are really looking for when they read the resumes that land on their desks. Following is our list of the Top Ten Traits of Superior Employees—complete with specific examples of how to weave these traits into your next resume to really spice it up.



1. Openness

Mastered a new software program under the supervision of the sales manager and taught it to others throughout the sales department.



2. Commitment

Studied the company's vision statement so I was better prepared to carry it out in my daily tasks.



3. Ethnic Experience

Studied Spanish (or German, Italian, etc.) in order to be able to communicate and negotiate effectively with international partners.



4. Communication

Took a communications class on my own to improve my skills with coworkers and clients.



5. Community Service

Headed up a community-service program on behalf of the company to serve the local community's underprivileged children.



6. Enthusiasm

Joined the local branch of Business Network Allies in order to network with other professionals.



7. Integrity

Presented the company's products and services in an honest and above-board manner, thereby drawing new clients and building the bottom line.



8. Responsiveness

Learned from (and shared with) others new and innovative ideas that helped broaden our client base and increase revenue.



9. Ingenuity

Initiated an idea for expediting processes that was adopted by the company and subsequently credited to me.



10. Team Spirit

Received the "Team Spirit" Award for fair and balanced work with colleagues and management.

Make it easy for employers to lean in your direction—and to want to read more of what you have to say. Demonstrate that you're the candidate they are looking for: someone who not only is a good, reliable employee, but who also stands out from the crowd because of your personal qualities and high character.



Resume Secret #3

Tell It Like It Is. Be Specific.



When you're hungry for a sandwich you step up to the deli counter and ask for a turkey on rye with lettuce and tomato or a tuna and Swiss on whole wheat. In other words, you're specific. If you're in the market for a new car, you go to a dealership and ask to see a Ford Taurus or a Toyota Highlander. And if you spot a book you'd like to buy, you ask the clerk to ring up your purchase—whether for the new edition of *Gone With the Wind* or *Nitty-Gritty Grammar* so you can get swept up in a classic American romance or brush up on punctuation and mechanics.

Being *specific* is the essential key to getting what you want. Yet many job hunters forget its importance when it comes to creating a resume for the job they're eager to fill.

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