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Is Your Resume Helping (or Hurting) You?

To say that the job market is **flooded** with candidates would be an understatement.

In an article from SHRM contributor Roy Maurer, he states that job-search site Indeed sees, "2.6 million new resumes added each month."

With that many people out there, you may be wondering how a job applicant can ever hope to set themselves apart.

Don't worry, I have good news!

It's not as difficult as it seems– I've compiled a few tips to help you navigate your way through the resume and application process, so that your resume makes it through "The System" and actually into the hands of an interested hiring manager.

Tip 1: Resume Length

The truth is, resume length will vary depending on experience and what you are trying to accomplish, but the real key is **relevance**.

Quite simply, if the information is relevant to the job, then it should be included on your resume.

This means that recent graduates and entry-level candidates will most likely have a shorter resume than mid-levels professionals and executives.

On average, a young or transitioning professional may only need a one-page resume, but more experience requires more space.

A two-page resume is perfectly acceptable if relevant content warrants a second page, but be cautious about adding any additional pages.

Tip 2: Positioning Statement

Somewhere in the opening section (top 1/3) of your resume, you will need to state your intentions.

While I often employ a "Professional Profile" and a "Skills" section to accomplish this, I also use specific titles or descriptions in bold print to draw the attention of the reader.

This can be something as simple as, **Sales and Marketing Manager**, or it can be more specific if you specialize in something or want to target a specific position.

The important thing is that your positioning statement be visible right up front, so the reader doesn't have to work too hard to understand the purpose of your resume.
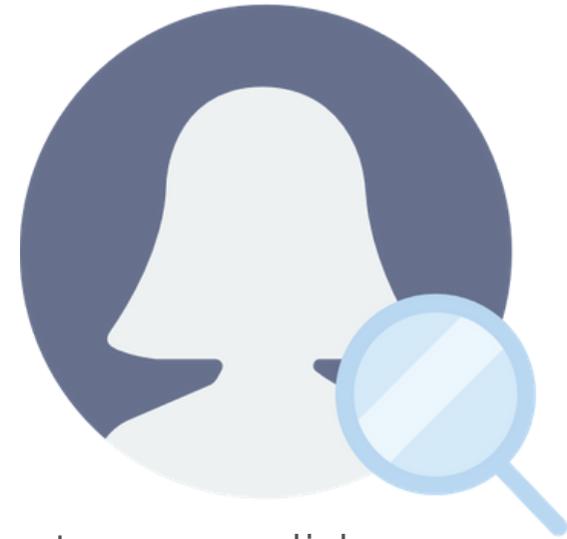
Tip 3: Experience Matching

According to an article by Martin Buckland, "Only 35% of applicants are actually qualified for the jobs they apply to.

A 2017 Recruiter Sentiment Study by the MRI Network found that 63% of recruiters said they did not have enough suitable candidates.

While it is understandable that a desperate job seeker might send their resume to just about any open position they can find, **doing so is a waste of time**– for you and the employer.

It's much better to dedicate your time to finding positions that truly match your skills and experience.

Tip 4: Keyword Matching

To take experience match to the next level, you'll want your resume to also match the job description.

I'm not suggesting you do this for every position, but if you really want the job, it's worth it!

Many career fields have common jargon and lingo right on the job description.

If there is a word or phrase you can swap out to make your resume more closely match job description, do it! But, **be careful not to copy and paste** the entire job listing (or even parts of it) into your resume.

The Applicant Track Systems (ATS) are sophisticated enough to notice, and they will discard your resume.
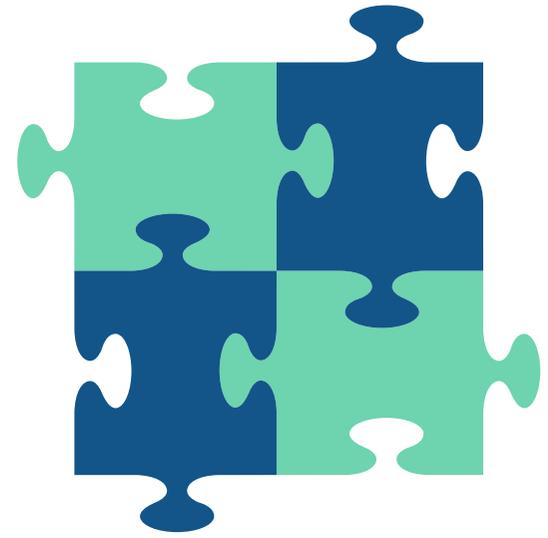
Tip 5: Quantifiable Accomplishments

High-quality, quantifiable accomplishments turn a mediocre resume into a promising one.

One great way to illustrate your accomplishments is to give numbers, percentages, and/or other measurable improvement indicators.

These could be, "increased sales by [%] in [span]", "decreased expenses", "implemented a new process that caused [positive result]", etc.

Accomplishments and achievements can be **anything that indicates you not only showed up to do the job, but you were actually good at it** and you made a positive impact.

6 Fatal Resume Mistakes

I recently attended an online training to gain a better understanding of Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

Did you know that there are **over 200 different types** of Applicant Tracking Systems?

And, 75% of qualified job applicants are REJECTED by ATS due to spurious reasons like incorrect formatting. (source)

In case you're unfamiliar, an ATS is a program that handles recruitment tracking for an employer. If you apply online, your probably sending your resume through one of these systems.

This means that candidate sorting and selecting is almost entirely electronic until the final stages of the hiring process.

Employers can program an ATS to select only resumes which meet specified parameters, which is why keywords are so important.

And while applicant tracking systems are rapidly getting smarter and more user-friendly, there are still certain– seemingly minor– mistakes that will toss out your resume faster than you can say, "I hate ATS."

The following information is by no means a comprehensive list of "Resume Don't"-s, but avoiding these items will help to ensure that your otherwise well-written resume doesn't get lost in the ATS abyss.

For the sake of clarity, the resume mistakes will be listed in negative terms, so you can better avoid them.

1. Do Not Place Any Content in the Header

While it may seem like a sly way to fit more vital information into the already limited space in your resume, the ATS's generally can't/don't read any text that is written in the header/footer of a document.

So, if you include your contact information in this section, **the ATS will likely never see it** and negate your resume.

Now, this isn't to say that I never use the header space at all, because I do. I utilize it on page 2 of a resume to reiterate name, and to indicate "page 2 of 2".

These items, however, are not included for the sake of the ATS. They are included for the sake of the reader- once the resume has successfully made it through the ATS.

2. Do Not Use An 'Objective' Statement

The practice of including an Objective has become outdated, like WAY outdated.

An Objective conveys what you- the candidate- are looking for, but a hiring manager doesn't care much about what you want **until they know what you have to offer.**

Instead of using an Objective, craft a **Professional Profile** as your positioning statement.

Your Profile should be 3-5 sentences describing a general overview of your accomplishments, strongest skills, and how you plan to contribute to company success.
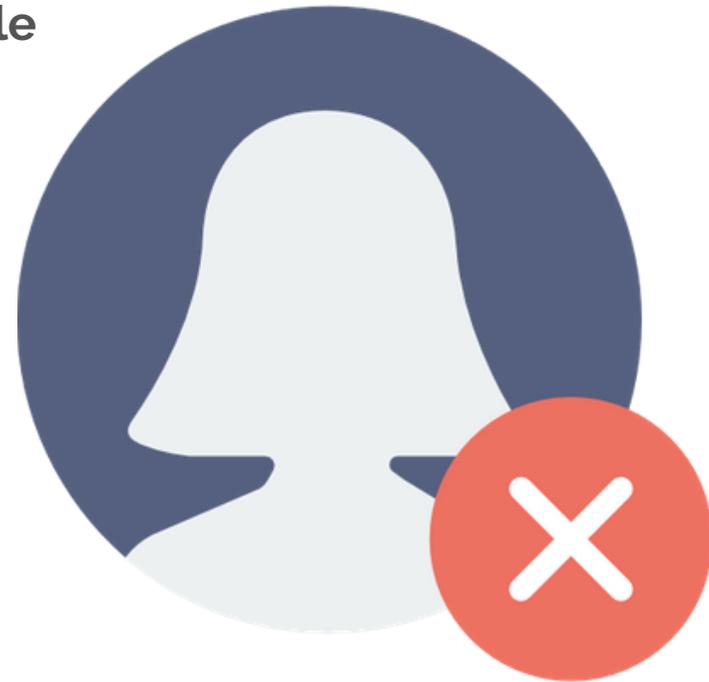
3. Do Not Use First–Person Pronouns

Note: This isn't directly related to ATS, but it is a common mistake which plays a large role in resume success.

Pronouns like, I, Me, and My, should never be used in your resume. While some trends in resumes fade over time- like the 'Objective'- the use of first-person pronouns has always been a 'resume don't'.

When writing content for your resume, it is generally accepted that the "I" is understood, meaning, it is omitted.

However, it's still YOU doing the "talking", so you'll want to use first-person tense, and avoid third-person. For example:

✓	✗
Manage(d) a team of 10	Manages a team of 10

4. Do Not List Your Dates First

Back to the topic of ATS– formatting is VERY important. For example, I see resumes all the time that list employment positions with the dates first, on the left-hand side, like this:

❌ **January 2014 - Present, [Employer Name]**
[Position Title]

Listing the dates first often goes against the way the ATS's are programmed. As a best practice, each position you list should lead with the employer name (or position title), followed by the employment dates flush with the right margin, like this:

✅ **[Employer Name]**   **January 2014 - Present**
[Position Title]

5. Do Not Focus on Duties over Achievements

This is perhaps the most common mistake I see amongst otherwise well-written resumes. These days, it is not enough to simply list the duties and responsibilities of the position you held.

Hiring managers want to see your contributions– they want to see how you made a difference.

Using dollar amounts and percentages is a great way to illustrate your success in current and previous positions – and the Applicant Tracking Systems are often set to search them out.

Being able to (honestly) state that you, "Increased sales by 20%" rather than just stating that you were, "Responsible for account management and sales", makes a big difference. **This is how you set yourself apart from the competition!**

6. Do Not Include Personal Information

Personal information like nationality, marital status, and spiritual beliefs are illegal for employers to ask anyway, so there is no need to include them in your resume.

Save yourself the valuable resume real estate and avoid divulging too much about your personal demographics- the employer should be more interested in your professional accomplishments anyway.
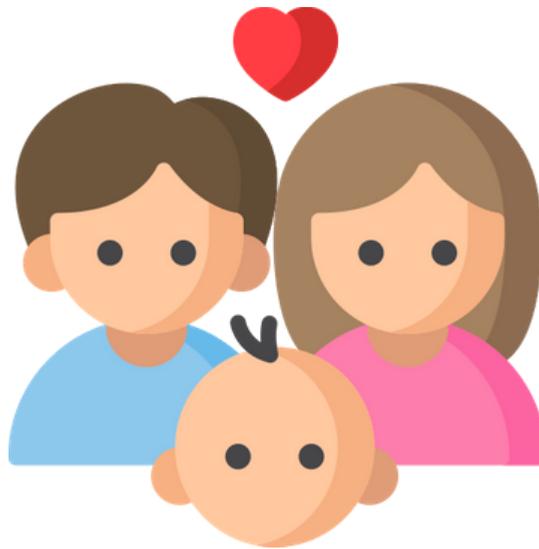
Why Functional Resumes No Longer Work

Today's job market is TOUGH! For many job seekers, it can be quite intimidating to put your resume out there amongst the plethora of other qualified candidates.

It's especially tough for those who have a less-than-perfect job history, like employment gaps or "job hopping" – moving from one job to the next without staying anywhere for more than a year or two.

The Founder & CEO of Jobscan, an online resume and job search resource that uses applicant screening software to scan resumes and provide feedback to clients, sums up pretty perfectly why functional resumes don't function (pun intended) very well with recruiters and hiring managers:

"Why do recruiters and hiring managers hate the functional resume format? It's a fair question, and to understand the answer, you really have to understand how recruiters and hiring managers work.

Hiring is fast and furious.

...Recruiters spend their days sourcing, screening, hand-holding and following up with candidates for multiple roles at any given time.

In other words, **they don't have time to read between the lines**, dig for information, or follow up with questions if you don't make the information they need crystal clear."

- James Hu, 4 Surprising Reasons You Should Avoid a Functional Resume

With applicant tracking systems in wide use and so many different candidates applying for the same positions, what can be done to ensure that your resume won't get thrown into the trash?

Many professionals with blips in their employment background believe they would be better served by a functional resume, as opposed to the more common chronological resume.

🚫 Functional Resume	✔️ Chronological Resume
Focuses more on a candidate's skills, experience, and achievements, and **de-emphasizes the dates for each specific position.** While this may seem like the best way to go for candidates with employment issues- it's not.	Presents all of a candidate's previous employment experience in **reverse chronological order** (starting with the current- or most recent- position, then the one before that, and so on).

A decade or more ago, functional resumes were used as a way to mask weaknesses in a candidate, such as employment gaps, job hopping, or lack of experience.

These days, however, recruiters and hiring managers know better. The truth is, when a recruiter sees a functional resume, they immediately start looking for potential issues- **it's usually just the first red flag.**

Functional resume formats often indicate that there is something wrong with the candidate, which can overshadow their true strengths and skills.

So, what's the solution?

For a complicated career history, your best bet is to **utilize a combination of the two formats.**

Utilize the top 1/3 of your resume to emphasize the skills/experience that are most relevant to the position, then present your employment in reverse-chronological order.

Education, volunteer experience, professional projects, and community involvement are a few great ways to help fill in gaps.

Make sure to **showcase your achievements and contributions throughout the resume**, in order to overshadow any negative pieces of your job history.

Once you get into the interview, it will be your job to speak confidently on why you are seeking that particular position, and how your skills and experience contribute to you being the correct choice.

The Value of Soft Skills

Are you qualified for the job? Great! But, almost everyone else in that stack is too. Let's go over what interviewers are really interested in: **your ability to work well with those around you.**

This ability to peacefully interact with your fellow human beings is a valuable one.

A poll conducted by The Wall Street Journal found that **92%** of executives valued soft skills greater or equal to technical (or, hard) skills. And, **89%** reported that they have a difficult time finding candidates with these valued traits.

People Skills + **Social Skills** + **Personal Career Skills** = **SOFT SKILLS**

People Skills- or how you interact with people- are attributes like listening, communicating, empathizing, and collaborating.

Whether you enjoy human interaction or not, being friendly, polite, respectful, patient, and having an appropriate (professional/PG-rated) sense of humor are extremely valuable professional currency.

"An ounce of people sensitivity is worth a pound of cure when it comes to daily human interaction and mitigating conflict. By developing these skills, you'll reduce bad behavior in the office, and your positive approach will be contagious. Wise managers know that they need a team with strong people skills."

- Lynn Taylor, national workplace expert and author

People Skills Examples

Strong Communication | Patience | Active Listening | Flexibility | Emotional Intelligence

Social Skills- or how you handle interactions- are things like word choice & tone, body language & gestures, professional poise & appearance, and your ability to manage conflict.

To be more aware of your social skills, analyze how you respond to social situations, both verbally and non-verbally.

Pay attention to your thought-to-speech filter as well as your facial expressions and body posture. **Watch out for the accidental eye rolls, slumping shoulders, and creating barriers- like crossing your arms.**

How you are physically perceived- dress, hygiene, etc.- can also have an impact on the impression of your social skills.

Conflict management is another social skill- be the water, not the fire.

Social Skills Examples

Cooperative | Respectful | Positive | Professional Demeanor | Negotiation skills

Personal Career Skills- or how you manage yourself- are traits like confidence, discipline, and time-management. These are the most common soft skills found listed in job postings.

Be aware of your weaknesses in this regard. If you are weak in a particular area, you can use this information in an interview as an 'area of future improvement.'

Knowing your weaknesses can lead you to have more confidence, and it shows employers that you've spent time reflecting on your professional growth.

"...every candidate comes with strengths and weaknesses and they want to know yours."

-Pamela Skillings, How to Answer: What are your weaknesses?

Personal Skills Examples

Self-motivated | Confident | Responsible | Calm under stress | Receives criticism well

With all of your skills, **make sure you can back them up.** Have appropriate stories and examples regarding specific skills, especially ones they've mentioned in the job posting.

Your ego should be left out of it; employers like to hear 'we' instead of 'I', 'me', and 'my.' This shows you are more of a team player, and solidifies your competence in social interaction.

Soft skills are all too often neglected by job seekers and training departments alike, but they are essential to your career success. Focus on your strengths, actively work to improve your weaknesses, and be prepared with evidence for both.

Soft Skills can be your competitive edge against the stack of other resumes that have similar qualifications.
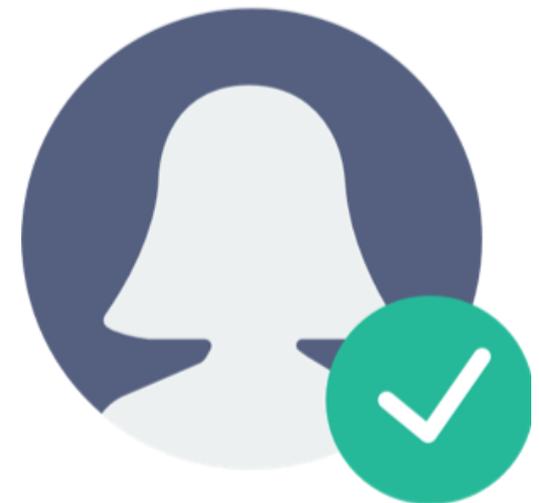
5 Quick Tips to Boost Your Resume's Value

1.

Contact Information Format

Your information should be highly visible and at the top of the resume, without being in the document's Header section.

Include your full name, as it would appear on any official documents.

Listing your full address is optional, but at least include your home city and zip code. If you're so inclined, you can also include, 'Available to travel/relocate.'

Finally, be sure to add your phone number, professional email address, and your personalized LinkedIn URL.

2.

Formatting the Margins

The margins are often overlooked when it comes to resume formatting.

Of course, every resume is unique and requires variation to fit content and context, so there are options with margin size.

Larger margins allow less content to fill more space, which can be good for recent grads or career transition resumes.

On the other hand, smaller margins allow more content to be placed on the resume without moving onto additional pages, but take caution not to overwhelm the page with text- **white space needs to be utilized for clarity and flow.**

The margin range I've found most effective is 0.6 - 0.8 inches all around, depending.

3.

Choosing Font Size

Just like margin size, your font size can vary depending on the amount of content in your resume and the style font you choose.

If you're an entry-level or transitioning professional and have less content, you may want to use a larger font to fill more space on the page, **but don't over-do it.**

For most other professionals, a smaller font will allow more content to be utilized without over-extending. Again, be conscious not to go too small- if your resume is hard to read, **you might as well throw it away for them.**

I've found the most success using font sizes between 10-12, including using 10.5 and 11.5.

4.

Include a Skills Section

The best way to grab the attention of an ATS and a human is to include your most relevant information in the top 1/3 of your resume.

This section includes your contact information, followed by your positioning statement- **not an Objective**- and ending with a list of your most relevant skills.

This type of formatting allows the reader to find your most valuable content quickly and effectively, keeping them from having to hunt for it.

Be sure to list several of your skills that match the job posting and description, and separate them with bullet points or vertical line separators for a clean, professional look.

5.

Proofread. Proofread. Proofread.

Is stating it three times enough? Probably not- because typos, formatting issues and underwhelming content are top reasons why resumes get overlooked.

It's not enough to just spell-check and grammar-check your document. Computers don't typically catch context errors and other problems that humans will notice.

A great proofreading trick I learned in school is to read your content backwards. We are usually always reading forward, which can allow some mistakes to go unnoticed. Tricking your brain a bit can work wonders for error-detection.

Another great way to proofread your resume is to **let someone else do it!**

I'm always available to give your resume a free review, so send it on over.

9 Resume Fonts Recruiters Don't Hate

It may seem like a low priority issue, but the font you choose can have a major impact on whether or not you're chosen for an interview.

You may be thinking: 'Really, lady? Some hiring manager is going to decide s/he doesn't like my resume in Times New Roman and just completely disregard it?'

Well, probably not...but maybe- especially in the case of Times New Roman. It's really an outdated and overused font. Think of it as the typewriter of fonts- it worked well for a really long time, but now it's...vintage.

TNR might not get your resume tossed immediately, but font choice is important and here's why:

The wrong font could potentially keep your resume from reaching a decision-maker in the first place.

The reason: Applicant Tracking Systems. If the ATS doesn't recognize your chosen font, it will only see this:

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Not a very compelling presentation of your skills, is it? Yeah, the ATS won't think so either- buh-bye resume.

To help you navigate this issue, I've compiled a list of 9 of my favorite fonts (including 5 that I actually use on client resumes) that are ATS compliant and approachable enough to make just about anyone happy.

First, I'll go over the difference between serif and sans serif fonts.

If you're unfamiliar with these terms, **serif fonts** are those with semi-structural details or small decorative flourishes on the ends of some of the strokes on the characters. **Sans serif** fonts do not have these details or flourishes.

Sans serif fonts have definitely taken the forefront, lately. They are considered more modern, hip, and informal. They're popular on websites, in marketing, advertising, sales, and any other public-facing platform.

You can recognize sans serif fonts not only by their lack of ornamentation, but also by their typically wider and more rounded shape.

Before we go any further, I should probably make a confession:

My name is Lezlie Garr, and I prefer **serif fonts** over sans serif–
shocking, I know.

Serif fonts are known as being more formal and traditional, which is why I prefer
them for resumes- and most any written documentation or communication in a
professional setting.

You can recognize them not only by their ornamentation, but also by their typically
more narrow and square/boxy shape.

Both font styles are generally considered acceptable, but since each carries a
different 'image', it may be smart to choose based on your industry or job type.

According to Hannah Craig in a recent Jobscan article:

"If you're applying for highly compliant, regulated, or formal fields, **serif is the way to go.** Serif fonts are perceived as reliable and traditional. They lend an air of authority. Use this to your advantage **if you're working in finance, law, or science** or if you're applying to companies with a long history and formal structure.

If you're working in **innovative and newer fields, sans serif is a good fit** for your resume. Sans serif fonts are perceived as modern and clean. They imply innovation and simplicity. Sans serif fonts work well for applications to **young companies** on the cutting edge looking to be disruptive and in creative or emotional fields such as **marketing or writing**."

So, now that we understand more about fonts, here are my top 9 favorites.

Fonts marked with an asterisk (*) are ones I use regularly with clients.

Serif Fonts

1. Palatino Linotype*
    a. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %
    b. *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %*
    c. **The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %**
    d. ***The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %***

This is a new one for me, and one I really like. It is very professional-looking and easy to read, and gives a lot of vertical space between lines, making for a very crisp, clean appearance.

2. Book Antiqua*
   a. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %
   b. *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %*
   c. **The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %**
   d. ***The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %***

This has been a staple of mine for several years, now. Again, I find it very professional-looking and easy to read, though the vertical space isn't as generous as it is in Palatino, so that's why I've started to lean more towards the Palatino.

3. Goudy Old Style
   a. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %
   b. *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %*
   c. **The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %**
   d. ***The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %***

While also clean and easy to read, this font has a bit of playfulness to it, which can work well for more creative fields or for younger/start-up companies.

4. Garamond*
    a. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %
    b. *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %*
    c. **The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %**
    d. ***The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %***

This font takes the playful vibe a little further, especially in the italicized versions. However, it is one that is regularly mentioned as acceptable, so I don't think it goes 'too far'.

5. Cambria*
    a. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %
    b. *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %*
    c. **The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %**
    d. ***The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %***

While this is still a serif font, the letters take on a much more rounded shape than most other serif fonts. I've always thought of Cambria as the Calibri of serif fonts.

Other acceptable Serif fonts:

Bookman Old Style • *Bookman Old Style* • **Bookman Old Style** • ***Bookman Old Style***
Constantia • *Constantia* • **Constantia** • ***Constantia***
Georgia • *Georgia* • **Georgia** • ***Georgia***

Sans Serif Fonts

6. Calibri*
    a. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %
    b. *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %*
    c. **The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %**
    d. ***The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %***

Speaking of Calibri – this font is the most recent default for Microsoft Word documents, and as such has become super popular for resumes. It is has a very clean, crisp look and leaves plenty of vertical space between lines.

7. Helvetica
    a. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %
    b. *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %*
    c. **The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %**
    d. ***The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %***

This font has a very similar look to Calibri, though it is a bit wider and has just a bit more flare, especially in the italicized versions.

8. Trebuchet MS
    a. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %
    b. *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %*
    c. **The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %**
    d. ***The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %***

This font has a more narrow, tall look, which cuts down on the vertical space between lines, but doesn't lose any readability because of it. It takes the playfulness of Helvetica a step further, without overdoing it.

9. Corbel*
    a. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %
    b. *The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %*
    c. **The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %**
    d. ***The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 $ %***

This font has always struck be as the playful younger cousin of Calibri and Cambria. It looks similar to both, but has a lighter appearance and takes the playful, creative vibe even further.

Other acceptable Sans Serif fonts:

Didot • *Didot* • **Didot** • *Didot*
Tahoma • *Tahoma* • **Tahoma** • *Tahoma*
Verdana • *Verdana* • **Verdana** • *Verdana*

The Importance of a Secondary Resume

Having multiple resumes has become a common practice amongst professionals of all varieties.

With the prevalence of hiring technology and the increasing importance of targeted resumes and relevant keywords, having multiple resumes allows you to more effectively target your pursuits.

Adding a second resume also opens you up to more options, and allows each resume to be directly targeted toward it's intended audience.

When does it make sense to consider multiple resumes?

Here are just a few reasons you might consider having multiple resumes:

- Going through a career transition
- Considering a career change
- Having multiple areas of expertise
- Applying to different types of positions

During a career transition, having multiple resumes allows the job seeker to target different career directions, **giving them more options and opportunities** to be successful in finding a new position.

For professionals just considering a career transition and weighing their options, creating a secondary resume can serve as a great exercise in learning exactly how strong their skills are in a given area.

If they can come up with enough compelling content to fill an effective resume, then chances are they've got a reasonable shot at successfully making the transition into that area of interest.

Even professionals who aren't in a career transition can benefit from having multiple versions of their resume at-the-ready.

For example, a 5th-year professional in technology, engineering, sales, etc. has likely developed specific expertise and/or skills in multiple areas.

Any one of these areas could present an unexpected opportunity at any time, **which would make it incredibly advantageous to already have a relevant resume available**– not just a general resume, but one that is tailored to emphasize their strengths and skills as they relate to that specific area.

Depending on the types of positions you plan to target and how different they are, it may even be beneficial (or necessary) to have more than 2 resumes.

There was a time in my career when I had 3 different resumes because I wasn't sure if I wanted to stay in college-level career services, try to move into recruiting, or change course completely and pursue jobs as an Executive Administrative Assistant.

Do the resumes have to be completely different?

Unless you're targeting drastically different career fields or job types, chances are there will be some overlap and similarities between the various versions of your resume. **The important thing to keep in mind is relevance.**

Think of your intended audience and focus on what is relevant to them.

For career transition-ers to do this effectively, think of your career history and job functions in a whole new way- analyze the similarities between your current/post jobs and the new ones you'll be pursuing.

Emphasize transferrable skills by **(1)** identifying skills used in previous positions that can prove valuable in the new target positions, then **(2)** rewriting resume job descriptions to clearly demonstrate how those skills relate and add value.

This requires some out-of-the-box thinking and is probably one of the most difficult aspects of writing a transitional resume versus other, straight-line career path resumes.

Selling transferrable skills is one of the key parts of this process, so **be sure to devote focus and attention to this task.**

Changing careers can feel intimidating, confusing, and sometimes overwhelming.

But I promise they're not as complex as they seem. Once you dial-in your focus on understanding your audience, how best to target them, and how to effectively implement your efforts to meet their needs, it all starts to fall into place.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about your secondary resume, please reach out to me- I'm always happy to help with a free consultation.

Is a Cover Letter Really Necessary?

(Spoiler alert: yes, it is.)

Success with your job search isn't solely dependent upon the content of your resume and your answers to interview questions.

The secret of success lies in the subconscious messages you send throughout the process, and the cover letter is part of that process to success.

"While writing cover letters is time-consuming, the consensus is that the effort could give you an edge and help you land more interviews."

- Kim Isaacs, Monster Resume Expert

Here are some important messages you'll want to send in your cover letter:

- **You know where you're applying.** This may sound obvious, but a common mistake is to leave another company's name- from a previous application- on a template you might be using. It's important to use the company's name for many reasons, just make sure it's the correct name!

- **You are serious about the position.** Writing a cover letter shows- first and foremost- that you care enough about the position to write one. You might be surprised how many people just don't take the time to complete their application.

- **You may be connected.** According to the 2015 Jobvite Recruiter Nation Survey, **78%** of recruiters find their best quality hires through referrals. The cover letter is the best place to mention a professional connection!

- **You are passionate about the Job.** Resumes don't allow much room for expressing personality or passion, but cover letters are the perfect place to include the "human element" that hiring managers respond to.

- **You understand the importance of the process.** The cover letter is a formal part of the candidate portfolio, and including it shows that you understand and respect the full process.

- **You go the extra mile.** Add a few details about your best achievements and accomplishments; expand on the ones mentioned in your Resume. Your cover letter is the perfect opportunity to go into more detail about how you achieved your successes.

How to Write a Cover Letter that Wows

Cover letters are a hot topic of conversation these days. There are so many questions out there about how to write them, if recruiters and employers read them (they do), and whether they're even necessary at all (they are).

To be honest, sometimes– maybe even often– cover letters don't get read. But sometimes they do. And unless you can know with absolute certainty whether or not yours will be read each time you apply, it's best to play it safe.

Having a cover letter also tells recruiters and hiring managers that you are interested enough in the position to make sure you're fully prepared.

It says that you're the type of professional who takes things seriously, completes tasks, and **understands the importance of getting the job done right.**

So how do you write a cover letter that's effective, eye-catching, and tells the reader exactly why you'd be perfect for the position?

I won't pretend to have all the answers, but here are a few tips I follow to make sure my clients are successful:

Include Your Name and Contact Info

Make it as easy as possible for recruiters and hiring managers to contact you. At the very least, include your name, phone number, and email address. There's no need to list more than one number, and no need to designate whether it's 'home' or 'cell'. **The email address you use should be professional** and it should match your name.

It may also be beneficial to include your address (or just a city and state) and/or your customized LinkedIn URL.

Address the Hiring Manager

I get it. Sometimes you honestly can't find out who the decision-maker is for a position. But most of the time you can, and it really does benefit you to put in the effort to try to find it.

Sometimes their info is listed on the job posting (though that's becoming less and less common). Sometimes you can find the head of HR on a company's website.

Other times you may want to call the company and say something as simple as, "Hi, I'm interested in applying to the (such-and-such) position listed on (your website/indeed/etc.). **Would you be able to tell me who I should address the cover letter to?"**

All of these actions show that you're resourceful and you know how to get a job done, even if the solutions aren't readily apparent.

Use the Job Description / Posting as a "Cheat Sheet"

With online Applicant Tracking Systems as prevalent as they are in the hiring process these days, it's important that your cover letter be targeted as closely as possible to the job description.

This will help ensure that you catch the attention of both the ATS and the hiring manager.

Don't worry, this doesn't mean you have to start 'from scratch' every time. You can create a general cover letter that can be updated for each new position to which you apply.

You can add or switch out specific achievements, pieces of content, bullet points, etc. in order to best match the position requirements.

Cite a Specific Day to Follow Up (and actually do it)

Toward the end of your letter, close by stating that you will follow up with them on a certain day to request an appointment to further discuss how your qualifications meet their needs. And then actually follow through on your word.

I know it can be awkward to pick up the phone, call a stranger, and try to "sell" your qualifications to them. But if they're actively hiring and you've effectively done your job in the resume and cover letter, **they'll likely be happy to arrange an interview.**

Always be respectful of their time. Show them through your words and actions that you know their time is valuable, and that you appreciate them spending some of it on you.

Keep the Focus on Them

To purposefully mis-quote a timeless piece of advice from President John F. Kennedy: "State not what the company can do for you, but what you can do for the company."

The best way to endear yourself to a recruiter or hiring manager is to demonstrate your value as it relates specifically to their needs.

Submitting a boiler-plate cover letter every time won't work. But by understanding the best ways to be effective, you can make small tweaks each time that create a big difference in the end result.

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"Lezlie has been outstanding to work with. **The finished product was exceptional**...and I couldn't be more pleased with the outcome. **I would highly recommend her services.** You won't be disappointed."

- Daniel R., Senior-Level Retail Mgr.

"After Lezlie updated my resume, **I got two interviews right away!**"

-Jennifer O.
School & Community Counselor