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The Blayze Unguem Guide to Writing the Perfect Résumé

“ad unguem”
To seek perfection...

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The Résumé

Your résumé is the most convenient way to market yourself, it is a 'snapshot' of you as an individual. Résumés are the chance for you to 'sell' your experience, skills, achievements and qualifications to potential employers, with the aim of it securing yourself an interview.

Whilst you might possess all of the necessary requirements for a vacancy, your résumé has failed if the potential employer does not recognise that you possess these attributes. To write the perfect résumé, ensure that you are knowledgeable about the position you are applying to, but also well-informed about your potential employer. The more you know, the more you can adapt your résumé to the specific role requirements in order to make it more effective.

Structure

Typically the following structure should be used for your résumé:

- Personal Details
- Profile / Career Objective
- Key Skills
- Education, Training & Qualifications
- Employment History
- References

Format

Your résumé should be clear and simple to read. Ensure that you are using readable fonts (Arial, Times New Roman, Georgia etc.), in a standard size (size 11 or 12). To highlight any key points within the document, make use of bullet points, and sparingly use **bold**, *italics* and underlining. Always be sure to re-read your résumé a couple of times to guarantee that there are no spelling or grammatical errors.

Education, Training & Qualifications

Education & Qualifications

Be sure to list your education and professional qualifications in chronological order, starting with the most recent qualification first. Both the dates and the name of the establishment attended should be included in this section.

To make sure that your education section is short and clear, summarise your qualifications instead of listing every one. For example, you could write your GCSE results as...

“10 GCSE’s Grades A-C, including Maths and English”, as opposed to listing individual results.

For higher qualifications, you should however expand your grades. For example: “A-Levels in Business Studies (Grade A), Maths (Grade B) and English Literature (Grade B)” or “BA (Hons) Business Studies (2:1)”.

Training

If you have attended training courses during your career (both company courses and courses attended on your own initiative), then these should also be noted on your résumé in the Education section. Training courses and additional qualifications demonstrates to future employers that you as individual have a commitment to career and personal development. Again, any training that you have attended should be listed in chronological order, starting with the most recent first.

Professional Memberships & Organisations

If you hold a professional memberships then this should also be included within this section.

Layout

If you achieved a formal degree within the last 5 years, this education section should be listed at the top of your résumé after your Profile & Key Skills. If you obtained a degree prior to this, but your degree discipline is significant to the role in which you are applying for, then this section should also be included at the top.

If you do not hold a recent, significant formal degree, than you should place your Education section below your Employment History.

Profile / Career Objectives

Your profile is the first chance you have to 'show off' your skills and experience on your résumé. Not everyone that lays eyes on your CV will take the time to read the document from start to finish, so it is important that this section is concise yet descriptive to compel the hirer to keep reading.

Your profile should contain:

- A short report of yourself, briefly highlighting any of your key skills & areas of expertise that are applicable to the vacancy.
- Relevant achievements / results that you have gained through these areas of expertise.
- Highlighted industries that you have worked within and the number of years' experience inside these.

In your Profile, you should however try not to use generic key words that feature on the majority of other job seekers résumés (LinkedIn has revealed a number of these as being *Motivated, Passionate, Creative, Driven, Responsible, Strategic & Expert*). Often hirers read these buzzwords numerous times, so it is important to try and make yourself stand out from the crowd within these few lines by not using them. If you are going to use any of the above terms, don't merely list them, state results and examples as to why this key skill or phrase relates to you and differentiates you from other candidates.

Key Skills

Underneath the Key Skills segment of your résumé you should provide a summary of the specific skills that you possess which are required for the role. Within this section you may want to bullet point your areas of expertise, making sure that you are not repeating anything that has already been said in your profile.

To ensure that your Key Skills section is effective, make sure that you have firstly studied the job description to warrant that all of the desired skills have been covered in your CV (as long as you actually possess these).

It is often a good idea to provide the future employer with real-life examples in order to demonstrate and prove your skills.

For example:

People Management - Recently managed a team of 5 Account Executives who have consistently hit target for the last 12 months.

Computer Skills

If your computer skills are further than basic then these need to be stated in your Key Skills section. Make the employer aware if you are 'proficient in' or 'familiar with' a number of computer systems and applications, for example, if you are confident and experienced in using Design software such as Adobe Suite, or MIS systems such as Tharsterns etc.

Languages

If you speak more than one language then this also needs to be highlighted on your résumé under the key skills section. It is not enough to merely state 'French' or 'German', as your potential employer will not be able to measure the standard you can speak these languages. You should, therefore, highlight whether you are a native speaker of this language, or whether your skills are basic or advanced.

You may also find that your skills differ in speaking, reading and writing, so it is important to highlight these differences.

If you have a language certificate, this should also be included in this section.

Employment History

Your employment history is likely to be the longest and most informative section of your résumé. It is a chance to provide a summary of your experience to date, and show future employers that you are willing and able to complete what will be asked of you in your potential new role.

Be sure to list your employment history in chronological order, starting with your most recent position first, this is because the role you currently hold tends to be the most important to future employers. Due to this, it is also important that your most recent position includes an in depth description of your responsibilities and accomplishments, previous positions can be more brief.

For each role, provide the following:

- The dates in which you were employed
- The company's name
- The location of the company (if there is more than one branch)
- Your Job Title
- Your responsibilities
- The accomplishments you achieved within the role

You cannot assume that everybody has heard of your previous employers, so where required, give details of their size and the industry in which they work.

Listing Your Duties

Do not simply list your duties at the company, state how your responsibilities helped the organisation to progress. If your prospective employer can see that you have accomplished something for another company, then they are likely to believe that you can add value to theirs. Within this section, ensure that your accomplishments are measurable, for example, state the time and costs that have been saved, or the revenue that was generated etc.

Repetition

Try not to repeat yourself throughout your employment history. Although several positions may have included the same duties and used the same skill-set, be sure to word these differently and explain the variances between them by highlighting the achievements from each particular duty.

Sentence Structure

It is suggested that you start each phrase with an action word, such as 'delivered', 'implemented' or 'exceeded', opposed to always starting with 'responsible for'.

For example:

"Developed new Business to achieve £1.2million against a projected target of £500k"

"Generated a 10% increase in Client's sales by identifying new markets and distribution channels for existing consumer product brands".

"Implemented quality checks, reducing rework needed on repro, time saving 15%".

The use of action words usually means that you can quantify. It is not very effective if you can't quantify something on your résumé, this section can be all about the facts and figures.

Gaps in Employment

There are often numerous reasons why you may need to take a break in your career, whether it's due to travelling, personal illness or family matters. Naturally, certain breaks in your career are easier to explain than others, but no matter what the reason, it is important that you know how to address this situation on your résumé. It is not rare to have a gap in your employment, so it will only be obvious if it is not explained.

It is key that you remain honest about your situation. Although it is not necessary to go in to fine details, missing out your career gap or lying about what was happening during this period could be a hindrance. It is vital that you do not try and cover up your break in employment simply by extending the period of a previous position. It is possible that former employers could be called by your prospective employer (especially if you are using them for a reference), and your time at that company may be verified during that conversation.

It is important that you remember your résumé is only the first stage of the hiring process, if you make it to the next stage, the interview, then it is likely that your career break may be mentioned. You should prepare what you are going to say in this case. Any employer will find

honesty a desirable trait, so even when it comes to carer breaks, be sure that everything on your résumé is truthful.

Voluntary Work & Work Placements

If you have undertaken any voluntary work or work placements then these should be included at the end of your employment history too. Just because you may not have necessarily been paid for the role, it does not mean that you haven't learnt any new skills or achieved any accomplishments during that time.

References

Many job seekers spend a lot of time perfecting their résumé, cover letter and interviewing skills, but often fall at the final hurdle by overlooking their references. Be sure to know who you are going to use as your referees, and ensure that you have asked for their permission before giving out their contact details.

Who to Use?

Your Current or Former Boss

Previous direct managers or supervisors often make the best referees as they are aware of both your capabilities and trustworthiness within an organisation. If, however, you left a company on bad terms, it is not recommended to use an employee of this company as a referee, as you don't want anything negative about you being said to potential employers.

Additionally, if your present employer is not aware that you are currently seeking new opportunities, then DO NOT contact them or use them as a reference until after your notice has been handed in. You do not want to risk your current position if there is no guaranteed role awaiting you.

Co-workers

Colleagues often make great referees as they are likely to know you quite well both on a personal and professional level. They will be aware of the strengths you bring to a team, and your ability to be able to work in a group environment.

Clients / Customers

If you are a Sales Person, Account Manager, or you're currently Self-Employed, and you have a great working relationship with a few of your Clients and/or Customers, then these can be asked to be used as Referees. This type of reference is particularly good if you are looking to work in a Client/Customer facing role, as the individual is likely to demonstrate your Communication & Customer Service ability.

Personal Tutor / Faculty Members

If you have recently graduated, it may mean that you are lacking in work experience, therefore a personal tutor or faculty member can be used for your references. Both of these individuals would have recognised your efficiency, learning ability, time management, and dedication, all of which are skills that can be applied to the workplace.

How to Go About It

Once you have chosen who you are going to use for your references, there are numerous actions that need to be taken.

Permission - Prior to giving out their contact details to future employers, you must first get their permission. It is very rare that a referee will say no, but it is common courtesy to ask.

Personal Details - You need to make sure that you provide more than just the name and contact number of your referee. Ensure that you tell your future employer the company's name, the individual's position within that company, as well as their email address in addition to their telephone number.

Preparation - You may need to prepare your references before they're contacted. Confirm the position you have applied for and provide your referee with a copy of your CV, highlighting any skills and accomplishments that are relevant and should be emphasised within your reference.

Thank You - Whether you contacted your referee yourself, or whether your future employer contacted them, make sure that you send them a thank you for their help.

Additional Documents

Blayze Unguem also offers its Candidates a comprehensive guide to excelling in interviews. It's a brief but very useful refresher on some of the key elements of the interviews that lie ahead for you - here at Blayze Unguem, we try to help you maximise every opportunity in securing the role that matches your onward career aspirations. If you believe that '*The Blayze Unguem Guide to Interview Success*' would also benefit you, please do not hesitate to get in contact with one of our expert Consultants on 0345 11 22 828, or email us at info@blayze-unguem.com.