

Job Search Tools: Your Resume

A resume is critical in the job search process. It is your marketing tool for employers and the gateway to getting the interview. A resume shows the employer your accomplishments and successes, and should focus on what you can offer to solve the employer's problems or needs.

Volumes have been written about effective resumes by career coaches, career experts, and professional resume writers. Everything from resume format and style to actual content is the subject of a variety of blogs on the internet. Templates are available through Microsoft Office and self-help online sites.

Resume Resources~

- job-hunt.org

"The purpose of the Job-Hunt.Org Web site is to provide the most comprehensive listing of employer recruiting page links, the best Internet-accessible legitimate job-search resources and services on the Web, and the best and most up-to-date advice from genuine job search and career experts. From the beginning in 1998, the focus is on avoiding scams and protecting job seeker privacy."

This site has great information, advice and links for all aspects of job search. Susan Ireland provides resume advice.

Susan Ireland is the author of four job search books including *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Perfect Resume*, now in its 5th edition. For more information about writing your resume, read Susan's books or visit Susan's Website SusanIreland.com.

- **Alison Doyle**

Job search and employment expert

Job Search Guide at About.com ←—this site has many sections for job search help

Alison Doyle's Job Search Guidebook provides you with all the information you need to make the right connections, take the right steps, and make yourself stand out from the job search crowd in this fast paced, every changing job market.

Posting your resume online~

Many job boards and sites will enable posting your resume. Use caution with this such as removing address and phone number from the resume. An email address is sufficient for recruiters to make contact.

More information here:

Posting resumes in outdated or unsupported file formats is the biggest mistake that job seekers make. The best format for uploading and sharing your resume electronically is Adobe PDF. The PDF (.pdf) format is the most popular and widely supported format for sharing documents and it will work virtually everywhere, regardless of the computer or the operating system (PC or Mac). This format allows you to retain all the styles and formatting in your resume (so it will look nice and presentable, as opposed to plain text) while making the content of the resume accessible to automatic resume parsers and search systems. You can easily create a PDF version of your resume online for free using the [Adobe's Online Converter](http://adobe.com/online-converter) (up to 5 documents).

Read more: <http://www.resumark.com/blog/andrew/how-to-post-resume-online-tips-to-prepare-your-electronic-resume-for-online-posting/#ixzz1jSXkGjvs>

You should know~

Resumes have changed a great deal over the last five years. The following expert article reveals what changes are needed for your resume.

Is Your Resume Outdated?

May 6, 2011 By James Alexander is [Vizibility](#)'s founder and CEO.

The resume is probably the hardest thing to nail down during the job search. Why? Well, your resume is a reflection of you and your work experience. If it's not presented in the right way, you may not have a chance.

The problem with most resumes is that they are outdated, especially if you haven't had to look for a job in a while. The rules of five years ago may not apply today. So what works and what doesn't? It may depend on your industry, but here are three common mistakes and how to fix them:

List what you accomplished, not your duties. What did you do in your past jobs to make a difference? Did you gain five clients in one year? Did you raise website traffic by two percent? How about creating advertisements that lead to conversions? Potential employers don't want to know your day-to-day duties. They want to know what you did to move your organization from point A to point B. If possible, list your accomplishments quantifiably. For example, you may have increased total revenue by five percent based on marketing efforts. Be sure to highlight this because potential employers want to know what you can do for them.

Objectives are out. If you still have an objective on the top of your resume, do everyone a favor and delete it right now. It's an outdated practice that most hiring managers will see as old fashioned. You are obviously applying for the position because you are interested in improving your skill set and advancing your career in the industry, so you do not need to state that on top of your resume.

Instead of an objective, why not list the link to your LinkedIn profile? Your LinkedIn profile can be used as an extension of your resume. Use platforms like this to discuss what kind of candidate you are, as well as what you can bring to the table based on your experiences. Apart from being better than an outdated objective, a LinkedIn profile can be used to list what you can't on your resume, like actual samples of your work.

Don't put ordinary skills. In every industry, it's pretty much a given that most people know how to use PowerPoint, or can operate on both PC and Mac operating systems. These are not unique skills. Speaking fluent German is a unique skill. Extensive knowledge of web design and CSS is a unique skill. Whatever sets you apart from the crowd is going to benefit you. Hiring managers and recruiters want to see what you can do to improve the function of the organization, not what you have in common with the hundreds of other applicants. For example, if you've used a specialized software that's known in your industry, you should put it since it's likely the hiring manager is not only aware of the program, but also aware of the skill set needed to operate it.

~More you should know

5 Skills Employers Expect On Your Resume

by Katie Lewis on November 21, 2011

Though most job candidates would consider the interview as *getting your foot through the door*, the resume is just as significant, as it is what opens that proverbial door. As a result, job seekers must think like an employer when crafting their next resume.

It's been said before: [each resume must be tailored for each position](#). In reading the job description and requirements, you can align your relevant skills and accomplishments. This strategy will achieve addressing technical skills for a job, like content writing or programming – but what about addressing the “[soft skills](#)” desired by employers?

In a recent [report](#) by the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\)](#), 244 employers took part in the *Job Outlook Survey 2012*, and the findings concluded that employers look for evidence of these five skills on a resume:

Working on a Team. Consider including relevant projects or contributions created by you and your fellow coworkers or classmates.

Leadership. List a leadership position (maybe within a club or professional organization) and accomplishments made from the position's responsibilities.

Written Communication. Incorporate relevant writing experience you have had in a position, whether writing blog entries or journalistic articles. If your experiences have not allowed for much writing, consider [starting your own blog](#).

Problem-Solving. This is where you want to include quantitative data. Some examples to list include if you saved time or money by making a process more efficient, handling a crisis, or gaining more clients than last year.

Strong Work Ethic. This can be exude from your resume if crafted to list accomplishments rather than responsibilities. It's about the quality, not quantity, of work you have done.

<http://comerecommended.com/blog/2011/11/21/5-skills-employers-expect-on-your-resume/>

Need help with crafting your resume? North Hills Community Outreach offers help for unemployed and underemployed people. For further information, contact Harriet Gibbs, 412.487.6316, option 2, extension 3217 .

Deborah, Job Coach

Job Search Tools: Cover letter

- **Do I really need a cover letter?** According to most job and career experts, the answer is YES!

A cover letter should always accompany your resume. Few employers will seriously consider a resume without a letter. A cover letter tells the employer exactly what kind of job you want to do and tailors your qualifications to that job.

Katharine Hansen, PhD. <http://www.quintcareers.com/edge.html>

- **How do I write a cover letter?** A targeted cover letter is essential.

Write a Targeted Cover Letter for Every Job

There's no getting around it: You need to include a targeted cover letter if you're applying for a specific job (form letters won't cut it). As the name implies, a targeted cover letter speaks directly to the job you're interested in, using words and phrases that match the job description. Thus, no two targeted cover letters should ever be exactly the same.

It's a pain in the butt to tweak your letter for every new job application, but it's also one of the best ways to show you're willing to put in the extra effort to do it right.

You don't have to rewrite your entire cover letter every time; just rearrange and restructure it to fit the specific details of the job opportunity. And don't forget to change the title of the position, the name of the company, and the name and title of the contact person for each job!

So how do you actually write a targeted cover letter?

Take your cue from the job ad (and the company web site). See what keywords and descriptors they use, which qualifications they emphasize, and in which order they list their desired skills. Then mimic those in your letter.

For example, below is an actual job posting for a **Personal Banking Representative**. I highlighted (in **bold type**) the words or concepts I would include if I were writing a targeted cover letter for this position:

The Job Ad

Personal Banking Representative

- Provides **world-class customer service** which **meets and exceeds** the **customer's** expectations.
 - **Actively sells** bank's products and services.
- Analyzes and determines the financial **needs of each customer**, matches this need to the appropriate product or service; **grows profitable customer relationships** based on **customer satisfaction**.
- **Meets and exceeds personal sales goals** and **actively participates** in all branch **sales and marketing** activities.
 - Opens new accounts, processes loan applications, and closes loans **according to guidelines**.
 - Demonstrates an **in-depth knowledge** of all **consumer product and services**.
 - **Takes personal responsibility** for developing and **maintaining knowledge** required to **fulfill job functions**.
 - Performs other duties **as requested**.
 - **May be asked to help out** at a neighboring branch.
 - **May be asked to travel** to meetings.

Here's a sample cover letter using those highlighted keywords and phrases to target this employer's specific needs:

The Targeted Cover Letter

Dear Ms. Banker:

The **Personal Banking Representative** position strikes me as an outstanding opportunity to contribute my four years of **banking and customer service** experience to an organization that shares my commitment to **relationship-building**, professional development, and continuous **growth**.

As an Assistant Banking Representative at XYZ Bank, I have gained an **in-depth understanding** of how to **sell the many products, services**, and financing options available to branch banking customers, along with the associated regulations and **guidelines**. I take pride in providing **service that matches the individual's needs**, helping ensure customer retention and satisfaction.

I am eager to build upon my **sales and marketing** skills to enhance your organization's **profitability**. I have earned an Associate's Degree in finance, and I make it a priority to pursue **continued training and professional development**, not only to **fulfill job functions** but to **maintain and develop my knowledge** of this industry.

I am confident that I can fulfill the role of Personal Banking Representative, excelling at both the official duties and **those that arise unexpectedly**, to become a valuable member of your team.

Best regards,

Your Name

By using the same terminology and explicitly pointing out the parallels between your qualifications and the employer's business needs, the reader can easily see the similarities. This leads them into your [well-written resume](#), where your skills and accomplishments convince them you're a candidate worth further consideration.

If you're a job seeker, do you target your cover letters for each employer? If you're a hiring manager, can you tell who's taken the time to target their cover letter to your needs? In either case, does it really make a difference?

The Pongo Blog www.pongoresume.com

For help in your job search and cover letter, North Hills Community Outreach offers help for unemployed and underemployed people. For further information, contact Harriet Gibbs, 412.487.6316, option 2, extension 3217 .

Deborah, Job Coach

Job Search Tools: Your reference sheet

According to Bob Warren, founder of ResumeBear.com,

“ A strong resume and interview may place job seekers in the running for a position, but a new survey from OfficeTeam finds the results of a reference check can be the real deal maker — or breaker. Managers interviewed said they remove more than one in five (21 percent) candidates from consideration after speaking to their professional contacts. When it comes to what hiring managers are looking for when speaking to references, more than a third (36 percent) said they are most interested in getting input on an applicant’s past job duties and experience. Learning about the individual’s strengths and weaknesses came in second, with 31 percent of the response”.

Your references can make the difference in getting the job/position so careful consideration is in order as to whom you list. Contacts should be able to communicate your work skills, qualifications, and attitude in a positive light.

Companies usually want professional references rather than personal references. Choosing a supervisor is often not the best choice because some companies have policies restricting or prohibiting sharing this information. People with whom you have worked closely can make excellent references, including former clients, teammates, professors or community leaders. Presenting three to five professional references is standard.

After asking for permission to include each person as a reference, preparing them for professional contact is vital. Establishing a connection and sharing information about your job search will enable your reference to give a complimentary review. A copy of your resume should be given as well as a list companies to which you have applied. Keep your references up-dated with your progress.

Some of the questions asked by a potential employer could be:

- Can you please describe how you know the candidate? And for how long?
- How would you rate the candidate's skills in _____?
- Can you describe the candidate's communications abilities?
- How well does the candidate work under pressure?
- Can you describe the candidate's attitude toward work?
- How well does the candidate take constructive criticism?
- How well does the candidate interact with co-workers?
- Is the candidate a team player?
- How would you describe the candidate's honesty and integrity?
- Can you describe the candidate's key strengths and weaknesses?
- How receptive is the candidate to new ideas and procedures?
- Given a description of the position the candidate is applying for, do you think the candidate is a good match?
- If you were in a position to hire this candidate for a similar position, would you do so?
- Can you describe the candidate's leadership, managerial, or supervisory skills?
- Do you have any additional information or comments that might help us make a better decision about this candidate?

http://www.quintcareers.com/job_references.html

~How to create your reference sheet

“Your references should be listed on a page separate from other job application materials,” says Jeff Shane, vice president at Allison & Taylor, a professional reference- and background-checking service based in Rochester, Michigan. “Your reference list should match your resume’s fonts and format.”

Include the names and complete contact information of each reference, including job title, employer, business address, email address and telephone number, he says. “Their relationship to you -- should also be identified,” he says.

<http://career-advice.monster.com/job-search/getting-started/prepare-your-references/article.aspx>

EXAMPLE:

Professional References for Susan Smith

Chris Fields, ARC, Solutions Design Consultant

Teammate

Chicago, IL

Email: Chris@arcnow.com

Cell: 312-554-1234

Joyce Cirner, Microsoft – Partner Account Manager

Supervisor

Redmond, WA

Email: joyce_cirner@Microsoft.com

Cell: 312-555-0558

Susan Bridge, Independent Network Consultant

Client

Olmsted Falls, Ohio

Email: sbridge@hotmail.com

Cell: 440-666-5449

~A great way to enhance the reference sheet is to include comments:

Chris Fields, ARC, Solutions Design Consultant

Teammate

Chicago, IL

Email: Chris@arcnow.com

Cell: 312-554-1234

“ Working with Susan was a pleasure because she had such creative and innovative ideas for each project. Always ready to participate and looking for better ways to meet deadlines was a constant with Susan.”

For help in your job search and references, North Hills Community Outreach offers help for unemployed and underemployed people. For further information, contact Harriet Gibbs, 412.487.6316, option 2, extension 3217 .

Deborah, Job Coach

Job Search Tools: Your Interview preparation

The interview is the opportunity to show your skills and share ways you have succeeded in a current or former job/position. It is a two-way conversation with one person or a panel of people. Interviews can be on the spot or open, in-person, or by phone and whichever method is used preparation is crucial.

~On the spot, Open interview

Walking into a business and making an application can be followed by an immediate interview. An open interview can be advertised where an application is taken also followed by an interview. With both scenarios, be prepared to answer questions about: previous employment, references, availability, and behavioral “what if” “how would you handle” questions.

~Phone interview

This is usually the first contact after a resume has been received, reviewed, and a decision has been made that you might be a good fit for the job/position available. Preparation should include:

1. *Phone interviews are about showing you have the job skills to do the job--have a copy of the posting in front of you*
2. *Ensure you tie your job skills to business results*
3. *Have interview stories that show using job skills to get results*
4. *Print out your resume and have it in front of you during the interview*
5. *Stand up during the interview- better concentration and focus*
6. *Smile—goes to setting positive attitude, demeanor*
7. *Avoid having an interview conversation break up. Use a land line phone for an interview. Exception—your cell always has 5 bars and excellent clarity*
8. *Dress in something other than pajamas or workout clothes—again sets professional attitude*
9. *Get the interviewer’s name and ask about what the next step will be, when you will hear, when you can follow-up by phone or email*
10. *Remove loud music, etc. from your phone while a person waits for you to answer the call*

~In-person

“Fail to prepare, prepare for failure” is a phrase often used in connection with job/position interviewing. Researching the company or business will help with questions the interviewer may ask and questions you will ask the interviewer.

Other ways to prepare~

You want to present the best version of you in the interview—the least you can walk away with is practice for the next interview

~Interview practice, mock interview

Key to a great interview is practice, practice, practice! This can mean reviewing your “stories” about previous work experience. What will you answer to-- “Tell me about yourself?” “Why do you want to work at our company?” and more.

An online site offers a variety of ways to become COMFORTABLE with interviewing with questions and practice options.

<http://www.job-interview.net/index.htm>

EXAMPLES:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

[Interview Questions & Answers](#)

Get the job in today's job market. Interview experts Matt & Nan DeLuca, answer tough interview questions - "Tell me about yourself." Here are 3 easy steps to answer this common interview question - First be prepared with a thumbnail sketch . . . [Review the answer](#)..

JOB INTERVIEW

[Interview Guide](#)

Matt & Nan DeLuca and our job interview experts give you **answers to the interview questions and how to present them**. Be calm and confident no matter what interview questions you're asked:

- Answers to interview questions & tough follow-up interview questions
- 3 practice interviews, 24 hour interview prep
- Questions to ask the interviewers and interview thank you's

INTERVIEWS

[Free Mock Interviews](#)

Interviews questions from actual job interviews including accounting, administrative professional, airlines, customer service, healthcare, human resources, information technology, law enforcement, legal, sales, manufacturing, marketing, and teaching.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

[Job Interview Questions](#)

Interview questions from the managers who hire, actual interviews and HR interviewers. Answer tips for interview question covering 41 job functions.

Expert interview advice is available through many sites. One such site is:

<http://www.job-interview-wisdom.com/job-interview-tips.html>

EXAMPLES:

Short List of Job Interview Tips

1. [Know some basic information about the company](#)

2. [Don't be late for your interview](#)
3. [Dress for success](#)
4. [Bring examples of your work](#)
5. [Don't talk yourself out of a job](#)
6. [Focus more on what you can do for the company, rather than what they can do for you](#)
7. [Don't bring up salary or benefits during the first interview](#)
8. [Bring several copies of your resume to the interview, and be prepared to discuss your unique strengths and accomplishments](#)
9. [Pursue the job you're interviewing for even if you're not entirely sure you want it](#)
10. [Don't be negative about past employers or bosses](#)
11. [Ask for the job](#)
12. [Be aware of your body language](#)
13. [Make sure your car is showroom clean, inside and out](#)
14. [Be yourself](#)

Mock interviews can be valuable because you have an opportunity to interact with another person acting as the interviewer and getting feedback about the experience. Interviews will often include behavioral questions which are used to gather information about how you will react or behave in certain circumstances.

EXAMPLES:

Top 10 Behavioral Interview Questions

1. [What was the biggest mistake you ever made and what did you learn from it?](#) - Answering interview questions that focus on your past mistakes can either make you or break you in your interview.
2. [Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with or you didn't like.](#) - The real secret how to answer interview questions about your relationship with difficult co-workers is explained here.
3. [Tell me about a time when a co-worker was not shouldering their fair share of the work load.](#) - Answering thorny employment interview questions that focus on lazy co-workers can be dicey. Here is the best way to respond without sounding negative.
4. [Sometimes we're faced with dishonesty in the workplace. Tell me about such a time and how you handled it.](#) - Dishonesty in the workplace is a problem today. Companies often include this topic on their list of interview questions. Don't be caught off guard.
5. [What qualities do you look for in a boss?](#) - Rejoice if this question shows up on a company's interview question list.
6. [What is the title of the last book you read?](#) - Seems like this common interview question is from left field. What do my reading habits have to do with the price of eggs?
7. [What do you do to improve yourself?](#) - Get some free interview answers to one of the top 10 behavioral interview questions.
8. [What are some of your hobbies or personal interests outside of work?](#) - Why would questions about your personal hobbies be among a company's general interview questions? What business is it of theirs anyway?
9. [Why did you choose your major in college?](#) - Don't let great interview questions like this leave you speechless if you have an unusual degree unrelated to your job target.
10. [What motivates you?](#) - This is one of those good job interview questions that basically asks: Why do you do what you do?

For help in your job search and interviewing, North Hills Community Outreach offers help for unemployed and underemployed people. For further information, contact Harriet Gibbs, 412.487.6316, option 2, extension 3217 .

Deborah, Job Coach

Job Search Tools: Examples

Targeted Cover letter, Targeted Resume and Reference Sheet with Comments

The following pages provide examples for creating effective cover letter, resume and reference sheet. While they are not templates, they can serve as models for creating your documents.

[Targeted cover letter example]

Alexis Morgan
321 Elm Street Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15237 412.765.4321
amorgan@gmail.com

XYZ Company
4500 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15223
RE: Office Manager, Job ID 9304

June 6, 2011

Dear Hiring Manager,

Recently posted on indeed.com, I found your position for Office Manager and was excited to note how closely my experience and skills set matched those in the posting.

XYZ Company's requirements for Office Manager:

- He/She is responsible for coordinating and managing various functions performed by the Professional Support Staff.
- The Office Manager reviews and evaluates the daily operation of support services. He/She establishes/assists with work procedures and standards to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the Pittsburgh office and is responsible for ensuring compliance with established corporate standards.
- The Office Manager provides administrative support of a highly complex, confidential and responsible nature, which often requires interfacing with high-level internal and external contacts requiring considerable initiative, discretion and a sense of urgency.

My skills and experience:

- Coordinated work flow, prioritized and delegated tasks, and supervised and evaluated support staff.
- Created positive work environment, ensured accurate, on-time completion of tasks as per company's requirements.
- Managed securities portfolio, regulatory filings; liason to legal counsel, accountants, stockbrokers with sensitivity and discretion.

Please consider my resume in application for this position. I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss my candidacy in an interview, and will contact you next week.

Sincerely,

Alexis Morgan

Resume attached

[Targeted resume example]

Alexis Morgan

321 Elm Street Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15237 412.765.4321
amorgan@gmail.com

A motivated self-starter, able to quickly grasp issues and attend to details while maintaining a view of the big picture. Expert in juggling multiple projects and achieving on-time completion within budget. Creative, resourceful and flexible, able to adapt to changing priorities and maintain a positive attitude and strong work ethic is prepared to bring these skills to the office manager position with XYZ company

Skills and Qualifications

- 15+ years providing outstanding administrative and personal support
- A clear, logical communicator, able to establish rapport with both clients and colleagues, and motivate individuals to achieve organizational objectives.
- Mediated conflicts among employees and between staff and management, utilizing diplomacy and humor to resolve issues.

Professional Experience

Banks, Inc.
Pittsburgh, PA

2002- 2009

Office Manager

- Coordinated work flow among five consultants and supervised three support staff. Prioritized and delegated tasks, provided motivation and direction to create a positive work environment and ensured accurate, on-time completion.
- Tracked office expenses and created monthly reports for senior executive. Prepared invoices, Accounts Receivable/Payable and banking.
- Managed President's securities portfolio and prepared regulatory filings as needed. Acted as liaison to stockbrokers, accountants and legal counsel.

Alexis Morgan

Page 2

Indako Company

1998-2002

Pittsburgh, PA

Personal Assistant to CEO

- Provided continuous, high quality support to President/CEO. Coordinated schedule, appointments and travel arrangements; managed expense account and recovery.
- Planned two major relocations: Assisted in site selection, worked with architect on interior design, and oversaw setup of equipment/ furniture/telecommunications
- Proofed and edited speeches, reports and press releases; screened calls and communicated directives to Board members and company shareholders.
- Responded to client needs and provided additional support where necessary.

Education

American University, Washington, DC

B.A., Psychology

(Reference Sheet Example)

Alexis Morgan
321 Elm Street Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15237 412.765.4321
amorgan@gmail.com

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

William Case, Past Supervisor
Banks, Inc.
123 Street Address
City, State Zip Code
(555) 555-5555

“Alexis was able to manage various tasks in our office with confidence and adaptability. Her staff had respect for her skills and commitment to making everyone work together in support of our company success.”

Ralph Evans, CEO
Indako Company
123 Street Address
City, State Zip Code
(555) 555-5555

“Alexis displayed thorough professionalism while with our company. Her abilities to organize and accuracy in preparing vital communications and reports were a great asset. We were sorry to lose Alexis.”

Elizabeth Jones, Director
Indako Company
123 Street Address
City, State Zip Code
(555) 555-5555

“It was a pleasure to have Alexis onboard for four years. She was a fine assistant and first rate working with our clients.”