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## Land Yourself in the Interview Room with a Powerful Resume

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Imagine that you are a hiring manager. You have a stack of resumes lying on your desk. How much time would you allot to each resume before making a decision to discard it or save it for a later more in-depth review? The average resume reader spends no more than 25-30 seconds on each resume before making that determination. Moreover, some veteran hiring managers admit that they only spend a mere six seconds before making their decisions!

What does this mean for you? A powerful resume is the difference between landing in the trash or in the interview room. Follow this list of dos and don'ts to make an impactful first impression and ultimately, to peak the potential employer's interest and score a face-to-face review.

### Dos:

- **Do make your resume about them, not you.** When reading your resume, employers are trying to make connections between your background and what you can do for them. Target your resume to each specific position, highlighting those qualities that they are seeking, as well as any similar job responsibilities you have held in the past. If you are staying in the same industry, use buzzwords or jargon to prove that you are an industry leader. However, be sure to avoid the use of company-specific acronyms.
- **Do use your professional summary to give your resume focus.** A professional summary should appear at the beginning of your resume. It should be short and specific, highlighting the value you could add to an organization: technical competencies, leadership capabilities and management style. This is your intro and could be the only part of your resume readers look at; catch their attention while you can.
- **Do give your job responsibilities punch.** Use power action verbs (i.e., lead, create, strategize, execute) instead of passive verbs (i.e., am, do) to demonstrate that you are a results-driven, self-starter.
- **Do emphasize your achievements.** Past performance predicts future success. Employers not only want to know what you have done in the past, but how well you did it. Highlight your achievements and give concrete examples of your success in previous roles. Cite the situation, what you did, and the results. Use dollar figures, numbers, and percentages to quantify your accomplishments, if possible; the use of such symbols draws attention.
- **Do write it in your own words.** You want your resume to sound like you; write it in the same way you would speak it. Avoid the use of words you would feel uncomfortable using in the interview room.
- **Do use consistent formatting throughout.** The format – spacing, alignment, fonts – of your resume should be consistent. Your headings should all be of the same style and font size as well.
- **Do create a clean and organized resume.** Your resume should contain sufficient white space to let the reader's eye rest, as well as to highlight the important information. Use headings and bulleted lists to allow for smooth reading.
- **Do keep your resume current.** Your resume serves as a snapshot of your professional self. Continually, update your resume. Revise position descriptions as your current role broadens, add new accomplishments and awards, and include all educational and developmental pursuits. Make



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sure it reflects activities and accomplishments that are relevant and supportive to the roles you are seeking.

- **Do proofread.** Read, read, and re-read your resume. Read it out loud; read it backwards; ask a friend to read it. You don't want to automatically disqualify yourself because of a misplaced comma or a misspelled word. Remember, spell-check only checks "spelling," not word tense or grammatical errors!
- **Do tailor your resume to fit the delivery mode (postal mail, email, electronic posting, fax).** Be aware of the intricacies associated with each delivery mode. A resume that looks good on paper might not look good as a fax. For example, while a serif font, such as Garamond, should be used on your paper resume, it is hard to read after being faxed. Also be aware that you may have a different version of a word processing program than the employer. Even though your resume looks perfect on your computer, it may show up on theirs with a different font or a mangled layout. To avoid such mistakes, convert your resume to a PDF before sending it via email.

## Don'ts:

- **Don't make the employer work to find you.** Use your permanent address and include a professional-sounding personal email address (i.e., mmurphy@hotmail.com).
- **Don't include an objective.** A resume should demonstrate how you can help an organization meet its objectives, not how it can help you meet your personal career ambitions. The days of the objective have passed. Use a professional summary in lieu of an objective.
- **Don't use personal pronouns.** Avoid "I" statements that turn the focus back to you. "I" statements also seem self-oriented versus team-oriented.
- **Don't share personal information.** This is your professional resume and all content should be reflective of your career self not your personal information, such as height, weight, and hobbies. Include educational and professional training, volunteer experience, and skill sets only if they are pertinent to your profession or the position in question.
- **Don't include past compensation information.** All salary discussions should be made in person and much later in the interview process. Including such information on your resume may put you out of the running even though you are open to discussing a different compensation package.
- **Don't mix noun and verb phrases when describing your past experiences.** To increase readability, keep your bullets parallel.
- **Don't use long paragraphs or text blocks.** Your resume is not a biography and is not all inclusive of your professional life. It is a high-level overview of the experiences and skills you want to highlight to an employer. On first look, a reader is skimming your resume; don't make them search for the important information.
- **Don't use justified text.** When using multiple tabs, in addition to justified text, your copy can become overly distorted, including stretched out words and awkward spaces.
- **Don't provide references as part of your resume.** It is not necessary to include professional references in your resume. Employers don't check references until further into



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the evaluation process. It is also not necessary to state that "references will be provided upon request." That is assumed. Provide a reference sheet only when asked for it.

- ***Don't make your resume more than two pages.*** The goal of a resume is to land you in the interview room. Your resume needs to entice the reader into wanting more. It is not necessary to include every task you ever performed in every job you ever had; rather, you should focus on those responsibilities and positions that qualify you for the role in question. Additionally, reader concentration and interest tends to drop off on the second page.