

## TARGET YOUR RESUME

Your resume has been seen by a number of potential employers is posted online. Maybe you paid a professional resume company for help. Nothing your friends suggested has worked. Your enthusiasm is fading as weeks pass and you are convinced there just aren't any jobs out there. How can you get an interview?

An important part of your job search is to ensure you and your resume stand out with potential employers by tweaking your resume then aiming it directly at a particular job or work area.

Most job seekers have one resume to send whenever they see an interesting job opening. The resume is usually written with no particular job in mind. As an HR professional who has viewed thousands of resumes, most of these resumes are sent to anyone and everyone, do not focus on the skills and experience needed for a specific job and often miss the target.

The resume serves as a narrative of your skills, experience and work history but also should provide insight to your character. Usually, the resume simply lists the candidate's work dates, experience and accomplishments and may not identify how well the resume and the job match. It is that match that may cause the company to call you for an interview.

So how do you get the company's attention and make your resume and you stand out among the dozens of others? You need to tailor your resume to the desired job and focus on the facts about how well you fit their job requirements and the company. Here are steps to follow that will get an interview.

List Job Tasks- On a sheet of paper, identify the tasks of the job from the ad, job title and job description. Check out the company's website to understand what they do, the product or service they provide and equipment they use. Whether the job is in the field, in the warehouse or in the office, list the skills the job requires. The list may include such skills as framing a home, driving a diesel forklift, cold calling prospective clients, word processing at 70 words per minute or filing legal briefs. Next list the experience required by the job such as "five years of residential homebuilding", "MS Office Excel mastery" or "BS degree in civil engineering".

Match Your Skills- Next, check those items where your skills and experience meet or exceed the job requirements. If you don't exactly match the identified skills or experience, don't despair as the company may still see you as the best fit. And you may wow them at the interview with your ability to be trained, your dedication or some other related skills.

Give Examples- Give facts and specific achievements on your resume whenever possible. If you have skills with different tools, software or have participated in a team project, identify your training, proven abilities and experience as a leader or team member. If you won a company award, tell what you did. Identify ideas you proposed that saved dollars, workplace safety awards, productivity and even attendance recognition that may peak interest in how you did and what you did.

Paint your Picture- Use “action” words that tell a story. Rather than “managed” and “supervised”, you “led five-person project on XX for six months”; “doubled sales to new clients over the prior quarter”, and “saved company \$XX in transportation costs”. Graphic images such as these would certainly stimulate their interest in you.

Identify Positive Personality Traits- List the traits that the job candidate requires such as leadership, enthusiasm and dedication. If the job is for a team leader, identify a successful project you led that finished on schedule and on budget. If the job candidate requires customer or client service skills, identify instances where you provided care and patience and if you were recognized by a letter, certificate or just praise from a supervisor. Give positive events that show your character.

Add Key Words- Now add words and phrases to your resume to emphasize your skills, experience and personal traits that best match the job requirements. Use words from the company’s ad such as “MS Office Excel” or “Powermatic drill press” as many companies search resumes on the internet and query those specific words in thousands of resumes. As you describe your work experience, keep the language simple with only needed acronyms or unique terms. If you use government acronyms and terminology, you may need to explain them. Remember that acronyms and technical jargon are used in internet searches, too, so do include them.

Keep Your Integrity- Most HR personnel will call your previous employers and references to verify your work history and references. Don’t embellish or exaggerate. Let your references know that you applied for a job and who may be calling them. Most important, ensure your resume matches and supports your skills, experience and personal traits and be ready to discuss them at your interview.

Compose Your Objective- The final tweak is to revise the “Objective” statement at the top of your resume. Once you determine what job you prefer, write one sentence to identify your desire to work in that job or area where you are skilled and how you welcome challenges and opportunities to use and improve those skills. Now that you’ve given focus and direction to your resume, it’s time to aim that resume at the target.

Ready, Aim, Fire- Compose a simple cover letter addressed to the HR department or a company executive identifying the job you want and the skills and experience you would

bring to the company. If possible, personalize your letter by associating yourself with a benefit to the company such as being familiar with the service area, having worked in the industry or even living near the company. Keep it simple and direct.

Targeting your resume to the job will greatly enhance your appeal to the hiring company and significantly increase your chances for an interview. Deliver facts about your accomplishments, examples of your successes and personal attributes as well as that you understand the job requirements. Focus your resume on who you are, what you've done and your potential. Then you will have your best shot at getting the interview and the job.

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