

## **REMARKABLE ADVICE**

When one thinks about it, it only makes good sense to prepare your resume in a way that makes it most easily utilized by the gatekeepers of job opportunities. Below is advice developed from having hired and placed thousands of workers at all levels and in just about every kind of industry. People responsible for finding the best talent, look for specific information to determine to whom they should speak or who they should pursue. Making it easier on the person sorting through dozens—or even hundreds—of resumes often means gaining a meaningful advantage over other applicants who use devious maneuvers or flashy formats. So, think about the following . . .

### **Make It Yours**

The most important thing about your resume, of course, is that it be “yours.” That is, do not say anything with which you do not feel comfortable. Putting a positive “spin” on situations is fine; but you need to be comfortable that you are being truthful, too.

Remember that if you are talented/qualified in a number of career paths, it is fine to have a few different resumes prepared that are geared toward getting a job in each field. This means emphasizing the education, experience, knowledge, skills, and so forth that are normally required in each type of job. Just be sure to submit the right resume for the specific job for which you are applying.

### **Mechanics**

Do not blindly adhere to outdated “rules” such as keeping it to one page—that is, unless you can comfortably fit all of the necessary information about your career onto one page—in which case, well then, do that. Do not cram information onto a page by using tiny little margins (top, bottom, or sides). Most people have their Word set at around 1” margins, so if you do the same, your Word resume will routinely open nicely and read well. Slick formats may look nice and be tempting to use; but often these appear garbled to the individual opening them as an email attachment. If you are in doubt, send your resume via email to a few friends and ask them what it looks like when they open it.

Make sure that your name and address, phone number and email address are on your top page. I know that this sounds elementary beyond belief; but I’ve seen resumes that did not have this information included! Please do not think that by omitting your address a recruiter will not know that you are not a local candidate. Quite the contrary. A savvy recruiter will assume that you are NOT a local candidate. If you are nervous about putting your home address on a resume, rent a post office box and use that. The recruiter wants to see the city and state in which you reside.

Do not use a huge font on your name as though it is all THAT important. Slightly larger and bold, is OK; but keep your ego in check if you are tempted to use a 20” font on your name. Also—and even more important—do not use a font smaller than 11 on anything that you want a potential hiring manager to actually read. Some hiring managers are over age 40—and a tad too vain to put on reading glasses. They might not consider you if they have trouble reading your resume. And that definitely includes your address, your phone number, your email address—everything on your resume in at least an 11 font!

Also, use the header and footer features to be sure that your name and the page numbers appear on each page of your resume. That way, if pages get separated when printed out by someone, it will be easy for the person to identify your resume pages.

### **Don't Try to Outsmart the Hiring Manager or HR Person**

To start out, please believe me when I say that most recruiters and hiring managers are very busy people and they just plain do not appreciate subterfuge of any kind. If they are experienced, they've seen it all and are savvy and resent gimmicks. If they are inexperienced, they are probably insecure about their skills and will dislike tactics that make it hard for them to assess your qualifications. No one wants to look bad to his/her boss, so inexperienced resume screeners and/or hiring managers will not want to pursue someone with an ambiguous resume, one that is missing dates, or confusing in any way.

### **What is Your Objective?**

It is very advisable to have an Objective as the first item on your resume. If you don't know what you are seeking, then don't send out the resume. No one is going to take the time to figure it out for you. This type of vagueness does not open doors. Quite the contrary.

In your Objective, do not make statements about wanting to work in a company that allows "room for me to reach my full potential" or "treats employees well" or "values good workers" or other rhetoric of that sort. The hiring manager is considering what you can do for the company and not what the company can do for you. Sometimes, growth and advancement may not be a probability right away—or in the near future—and how well an employer treats people is pretty subjective. Don't go there unless you really want to be perceived as a potential whiner. Don't assume that anyone is all that interested in your personal career growth. Of course, it is important to you; and it should be. What is important to the hiring manager is how you can make him/her look good by doing excellent work dependably for the long-term.

With word processing, you can—and should—customize the Objective to reflect the job for which you are applying. Needless to say, this does not mean a word-for-word match to the job title on the ad, but the gist of your objective should match, otherwise, it is most likely a waste of time to send the resume.

### **SAMPLE OBJECTIVE**

Objective: To obtain an architect position that offers opportunities to utilize my landscape design/installation training and experience to contribute to the continuing success of a professional team. To actively apply my creativity and knowledge and continue to gain hands-on experience in my chosen field.

For example, if I am trying to help a client find a mid-level individual contributor and I peruse a resume that indicates that the applicant is seeking a management job, I do not continue reading that particular resume. I know that either the individual did not carefully read the job specifications, or s/he did not care to take the time to adjust his/her Objective to fit the job for which s/he allegedly is applying. Either way, why should I invest my time when s/he did not choose to do so?

### **What Kind Of Person Are You?**

It is highly advisable to have a “Profile” after the “Objective”. The Profile in two or three sentences tells a potential hiring manager about your most outstanding skills, abilities, and character traits. Stress the positive aspects of your capabilities. It is A-OK to brag in your profile. If you are bilingual, for example, make sure that it is in the Profile. However, too long of a Profile loses its potential impact. Do drone and on and on—no matter how much you want to—because it will bore the reader and/or be perceived as useless rhetoric and will not be thoroughly reviewed. A friend can help you prepare a laundry list of your positive traits, talents, etc. Then, you “boil down” these to either bullets or two or three sentences that essentially “tells who you are.” Here are two samples:

#### **PROFILE**

Energetic, degreed, creative architect and realistic business person with significant practical experience, and hands-on training in Landscape Architecture—planning and implementation. Focused professional capable of working productively under pressure and completing projects on time and within budget. Congenial and team-oriented with proven track record of reliability, determination, and accountability.

#### **PROFILE**

Self-directed, intuitive, logical, dynamic, innovative accounting manager with extensive and diverse experience in:

Creative Problem Solving	Administration Management	Financial Analysis & Planning
Research & Analysis	Systems Implementation	Software Implementation
Innovative recommendations	Computer Applications	Advising/Consulting

### **Do You Know How to Use a Computer?**

If you have computer skills and the job for which you are applying requires computer skills, list these after your Profile. Don’t bury this vital information in text or on another page.

#### **SAMPLE COMPUTER SKILLS SEGMENT**

**COMPUTER SKILLS** – Effective knowledge in a variety of business computer systems and programs. Proficient in the use of Windows 2007 (Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook) and Access.

Be aware that savvy HR and hiring managers use skills tests to ascertain that you have the skills that you say you do. Plus, if you are hired without being tested and your computer skills are not what you represented, nothing good will come of it.

If you want your resume to be presented to the hiring manager, do not use acronyms unless even your mother would know what each one means. Often the first person to see your resume is a “gatekeeper” (resume screener) in human resources. If s/he does not know what an acronym

means, it may confuse and/or annoy him/her and affect presentation of your resume to the next level for further consideration. Worth the risk? No!

Of course, hiring managers may be looking for just these acronyms and key word searches will seek these, too. So, remember what to do from your high school English class. State the full name of what the acronym describes the first time you use it followed by the acronym in parentheses. Then you can use just the acronym throughout the resume thereafter.

**SAMPLE:**

Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR)  
Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

**Question: Which Comes First—Education or Experience?**

**Answer: “It depends.”**

If you are a fairly recent college graduate, list your “Education and Training” next; but if you have solid work experience, your “Professional Experience” should precede the Education and Training on your resume. If you attended college while also working full-time or have otherwise distinguished yourself while pursuing your education, be sure to highlight these facts. It is fine to let the reader know about how industrious or interested you are in a variety of subjects/pursuits; but I do not recommend including personal details such as marital status or how many children you have unless your lifestyle relates pretty directly to the job for which you are applying. Conversely, if you have been actively involved in volunteer work, be sure to mention these facts—unless the volunteer work was of a political nature or otherwise not universally embraced by individuals regardless of sex, religion, race, etc. Age has NO place on anyone’s resume.

**What Have You Been Doing That Will Make Someone want to talk with you?**

Your employment history should not consist of just dates and titles. Not giving any information on your employer reflects very badly on you. Include the name of the firm, city and state in which your job is/was located, dates of employment, your title, plus a brief (one sentence) description of company (type of business; size/sales/revenue of the enterprise, division or whatever it was that employed you and number of employees, if that is relevant to the job for which you are applying). Including a sentence or so about your employer(s) shows that you understood the actual nature of the business in which you participated, the scope and so forth. It is the height of arrogance to believe that everyone knows—or should know—all about the enterprises for which you worked. YOU should know enough to describe them, though; and clearly and succinctly. Include the websites of past employers if that is relevant, too.

Regarding your responsibilities/achievements in each role, do not go to extremes. That is, do not describe each job in exhaustive detail. I realize that we all tend to feel that everything we’ve done is precious and that “more is better”; but in this case, don’t believe it. List a few bullets concerning your job responsibilities or your accomplishments—whichever is more pertinent. The longer ago a job was, the less the rhetoric it should take to describe it. Overemphasizing achievements that were early on in your work life can make it appear that you are on the decline in your career.

If you are/were operating your own business, say so. That shows initiative, after all.

## SAMPLE

Malcolm Adams Landscape Design Services, Providence, RI

5/95 – present

Independently operated, sole practitioner providing landscape and other architectural services to a wide range of clients.

Recent Projects INCLUDE:

- a
- b
- c

### **Job Hunting in the 21st Century**

Over 95% of all recruiters deal exclusively through the Internet and email, now. That is, the jobs are advertised online, and resumes should be, too. I recommend saving your resume in Word so that it can be sent as an attachment most commonly accepted by recruiters. Your cover “letter”—if you use one—should be an email message that relates to the job you are seeking. The cover email message should be succinct and to the point.

As mentioned above, key word searches are common by all kinds of entities—from the job site you may be using to the applications screening system used by many employers of all sizes and types. So be sure that you have included important key words pertaining to your career goals, job titles, your experience, knowledge, and skills in your resume.

### **Listing References on the Resume – “Yes” or “No”?**

No. References are precious and should be protected by you. Only submit references if asked after you have been interviewed and are being seriously considered for a position. Make sure that you have permission from each reference to use him/her and accurate contact information. Then, whenever you think that they may be contacted, alert them to that fact so that they can be prepared and will take the reference checker’s call.

### **Comply With the Job Posting Requirements**

If the job posting tells you to provide compensation information, provide it. If a comparison of your skills to the job requirements is requested, prepare and send this with your resume. If you don’t have the time, level of interest, or inclination to cooperate with the recruiter, don’t waste his/her time by sending your resume. It is that simple. Finding a new career position is hard work; but if you want to succeed, you need to do the work as professionally and as comprehensively as you can. Taking shortcuts in the application process will not give you that competitive edge you want/need.

### **And Finally . . .**

Just a few more pieces of advice; and forgive me if these seem obvious. If I had not personally experienced failures on the part of applicants in these areas, I would not mention these:

Do not use your current employer's email system or fax machine to send out resumes. This makes it appear that you are disloyal and accustomed to using company resources for your own personal needs. The exception to this "rule" is if you include in your cover message that you have been given permission by your employer to seek a new position during work hours due to an impending layoff or something of that nature.

It is fine to have a cutesy little email address to use with your friends. Don't use these for job searches. Sounds like common sense, but many people just don't stop and think that something like imaduckfan@yahoo.com, bedbuster@hotmail.com, or yayagirl@aol do NOT sound very professional; and, believe me, I've seen worse than these. You wouldn't leave a nickname when calling a hiring manager, so don't use one on your email.

Also, sharing an email address with your spouse is not a great idea. Whether you are male or female, it makes you look dependent on someone else and/or as though you two do not trust each other enough to keep your mail in separate inboxes. Set up a separate account with your actual last name in it and use it only for business—such as job searches. Yahoo, for example offers free email accounts.

Train everyone in your household on properly answering the phone. Tell them NOT to act as though everyone who asks for you is a telemarketer—so it is A-OK to be rude—or to use this particular time in your lives to seek proof of infidelity by mercilessly screening callers of the opposite sex. Also, instruct them not to tell anyone who calls you about an opportunity that you would probably not want the job about which they are calling because you don't like to commute that far, or because you just received a job offer and seem happy with it or . . . whatever! Tell them to be polite and take an accurate message and deliver it to you. Period.

Note: I know that if you live with your parents, thoughtless roommates, or a possessive spouse, the training about being polite to callers can be more challenging. If the people with whom you live are fairly "untrainable" in these regards or if you are trying to keep your job search a secret from them, you may want to exclusively list your cell phone on your resume.

Then, you be sure to have your cell phone properly programmed as though EVERY caller is a potential employer. That is, the caller should not be subjected to crazy/loud music instead of a ringing sound and/or a silly or unprofessional voicemail message when you cannot promptly answer your phone. If you want to be anonymous about who you are on your voicemail, don't expect recruiters to leave you messages. At the very least, it is annoying for them to not know for sure that they reached the applicant whom they called. At the very most, they may think that there is a reason you are "under the radar" on your voicemail (avoiding creditors, etc.) When you do answer your cell phone, do so in a professional fashion, for the duration of your job search. "You only have one chance to make a first impression!"

Get back to people who call or email you even if it is only to say that you are not interested at this time. This is an amazingly small world at times; and unprofessional demeanor can come back to haunt you—and you may never even know that it happened. Just something that might have been good for you and your career doesn't happen; and that is just sad—and easily preventable.



Social media has added another set of potential land mines to job searching. If you don't know how to prohibit access to embarrassing photos, rhetoric, comments, etc. for example on your Facebook page, delete it all until your job search is completed. Then, still be mindful that there are risks to being too open about your personal likes, dislikes, shenanigans, etc. Employers look at these sites, now. You know it; so be smart about it.

Hope this information is helpful to you. Good luck in your job search!

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Penny is an award winning human resource consultant, a popular speaker, a published writer, and a source of timely practical advice on Entrepreneur.com. During her 25+ years in business, she has been the highest level woman executive in enterprises ranging from billion dollar Japanese manufacturing operations to leading edge high technology start-ups; and has directed human resource operations for Fortune 500 and Fortune 100 companies, as well. She has founded four successful human resource consulting practices; one in Boston, one in Detroit, and two in South Florida, as well as having headed a nationwide recruiting practice for a leading business consulting company, winning "Business Leader of the Year".

Her current Firm, RemarkAbleHR, provides employment-related advice and resources to all types of enterprises: finding and qualifying key personnel; advising on organizational matters, job specifications, pay policies, benefits programs, performance management, employee communications, best practices; and providing timely on-call guidance.

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## **Addendum**

Here are some other tools to help you in your job search.

Set up robots on the major job posting sites and/or on [www.Indeed.com](http://www.Indeed.com). You can set up more than one, so if you are seeking jobs in more than one arena, set up as many as you need to be most helpful to yourself. Check the job posting sites every day (CareerBuilder, Monster, niche sites for your industry, even Craigslist). Every day—more than once a day if you can. In this competitive job environment, "the early bird" really does catch the worm. Many recruiters only look at the first 100 or so resumes that come into their inbox just because the volume is unmanageable. You can miss the perfect job by minutes. Be the first one to respond!

## **CHECK YOUR SPAM/JUNK MAIL INBOX!!**

Many recruiters and hiring managers are from domains that your level of security may automatically dump into your spam/junk mail inbox. You risk missing an opportunity if you blithely empty your junk mail inbox without carefully reviewing what is in it, first.