Resumes In 2012: What's Old, What's New?

By CareerBuilder Posted Jan 4th 2012 @ 9:42AM 7/17/12 By Justin Thompson

It seems everyone has an opinion on what a resume should contain, how many pages it should be and how it should be formatted. So as we enter into a new year, what are the universally agreed-upon elements that are in, and which ones are now passe? Here are some of the best practices when it comes to crafting your resume in 2012:

1. Stop trying to make 'objective statements' happen.

The days of including a career objective and/or professional summary are over. It's a waste of valuable space. Instead, just address this with a sentence in your cover letter about how the position you're applying for fits into your overall career plan. Get to business by starting with accomplishments and facts that are relevant to the job posting.

2. Be concrete.

Use numbers and proof of what you've done. "Increased sales by 35 percent through client profiling campaign" is better than "Increased sales in my region." Stop putting generic tasks down, and instead, get creative in portraying what you did in your role or how you brought forth new ideas for products, processes, efficiency, etc. The more you can quantify your efforts with actual numbers or data, the better positioned you'll be.

3. Cover letters are back.

Like the "two page versus one page" debate, the subject of cover letters is heated. While some recruiters say they don't bother looking at them, others say some job seekers have grown lazy and won't take the time to write one or tailor one specifically to the company to which they are applying. It's a perfect opportunity to sell yourself, and it's where you can infuse personality into your application. But once you craft a terrific cover letter, don't just push it out to every job prospect. Take the extra few minutes to tailor it to why you want that specific job at that specific company and why your skills would benefit the overall organization if hired.

4. Keywords are your friend.

If a recruiter or manager can put your resume side-by-side with the job requirements and check off the same keywords, you've made his life so much easier. Instead of using a lot of useless jargon on your resume, pay attention to the keywords in the job posting. Be sure to use them in your resume and cover letter, because even applicant tracking systems are based on keyword searches. Just as you use keywords to search for jobs, employers are using keywords to find your resume.

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5. Get creative with quick response codes.

Young professionals are using QR codes -- bar codes that can be scanned by smartphones to download or link to information -- on the back of business cards and on their resume to link to online portfolios. As you network and attend career fairs, you're able to pass out business cards with the QR code that can link recruiters and other contacts to either your portfolio or LinkedIn profile so they can instantly connect with you.

6. Wow with visual resumes.

More people are using tools to help illustrate their work history through sites such as Vizualize.me. These sites offer tools to help individuals present the information on their resumes in a unique way that stands out. Just remember that you still need a traditional format to hand out or attach to make it easy for saving in company databases.

7. Give video a chance.

In this tough economy, job seekers are going to creative lengths to get their name, talents and personality in front of employers, like this resume video for a Google position. If you're going to create something like this, make sure you're providing substance or showing off your soft skills within the video instead of just doing something flashy to get the recruiter's attention.

8. Social media are here to stay

If you're not using social media to promote yourself, you're missing out. Just as employers use multiple avenues to push out job postings, you as a job seeker need to use all the channels available to you to put yourself in front of recruiters. Using Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn as a means to give updates on your career or connect with other professionals gives your resume legs and can make you more memorable as a candidate. But since companies are screening candidates through social media, make sure your online profiles are either professional facing or locked for outside viewing