

CAREERS

Getting Your Resume to the Top of the Stack

BY KATHRYN McKEE, SPHR
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY SOUND

Our previous column provided tips to hiring managers on writing attention-getting employment ads. Of course, applicants are also trying to catch someone's eye—with their resumes. The key to ensuring your resume gets read is in its looks as well as its content.

Look. Use simple, crisp and clean fonts such as Times Roman or Arial, avoid graphics, and select white or cream-colored stationery. The use of pastels, borders, or odd size paper detracts from the professional appearance of your correspondence. Use a 14-point size for your name and scale the rest accordingly, aiming for no more than two pages. Use only standard 8½ by 11-inch paper.

Content. Following your name and contact information, write a short Summary with key words describing your competitive edge. The average resume reader gives a quick glance at the summary, and if he/she does not see the desired qualifications, your resume goes in the "review later" stack. HR and savvy managers know what they want, and will look for key words that were in the ad you've answered, and then scan the rest, looking for more key words. If you are solutions-oriented, customer-focused, say so. If you are a seasoned manager or team player, say so. If you have experience in durable goods manufacturing, entertainment, and banking, put it in the summary—it shows you are capable of switching major industries. Your descrip-

tive words may send the reader looking for more details in the reverse-chronological job history that follows.

Accomplishments. If the reader liked what was in the Summary section, then the hunt begins for more details to back up what you said at the top of the resume. When preparing a resume, many people describe job tasks performed for their employers. We recommend that instead of listing job responsibilities, you write brief statements about your accomplishments. What are you most proud of accomplishing at each of your employers?

An easy acronym for preparing accomplishment statements is CAR – challenge, action, result. Describe the challenge or problem you faced, the action taken and the result. For example, "Reduced pension expense by \$28 million per year by updating actuarial assumptions." The challenge was to cut costs without impacting the benefits to employees, the action was changing the actuarial assumptions, and the result was a whopping \$28 million savings every year for the foreseeable future.

Your accomplishments will intrigue the reader who will want to learn more about you when you are invited in for an interview.

Kathryn McKee, SPHR, retired as Senior VP and Region Head of Human Resources from Standard Chartered Bank, and is now a local consultant and author.

Sponsored by



Santa Barbara
DAILY SOUND