

## The 5 Super Secrets to Getting Your Resume Read

What makes a resume stand out in the midst of the dozens that come across the desks of professional headhunters, human resource managers and executives alike?

**First, write a personal cover letter.** The cover letter is your initial opportunity to demonstrate to a prospective employer the type of work you are capable of doing. Take the time to find the name of the individual to whom the letter is to be directed and use his or her full name, including middle initial and please, please, correctly spelled.

People love to see their name in print and yet I am always surprised with the number of letters accompanying resumes that are improperly addressed, and worse yet, have incorrect proper names. How enthused should I be about representing the competence of a candidate who did not even take the time to spell my name correctly? Do you think the human resources director of XYZ Company will be impressed if their middle initial is wrong? It is critical to have such simple details correct.

The letter should be written as though you were talking to the person to whom you are writing. Your personal style is important and you should allow it to come through in the letter. If you use a professional resume service, make sure you write the copy and let them help you with the editing, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

**Second, limit your resume to two pages.** Your entire presentation should be three pages, your personalized cover letter and your two-page resume. Do not use a binder of any type, nor a clear plastic cover and do not staple any reference lists or other attachments. Your resume and cover letter should be readily faxable or easily emailed.

I know you may take pride in the “presentation style” resume but there is an opportunity to utilize that type of resume when you have achieved a personal interview. And, in today’s instant communication mode, it is more important to have a couple of pages that can be easily faxed or emailed than a multiple page, bound document that will need to be disassembled before it can be copied, scanned, faxed and/or emailed.

**Third, outline your accomplishments and achievements.** If you keep the word “outline” in mind as you draft your resume you will not have any problems keeping even the lengthiest and most decorated career to two pages. All of us have a tendency to expand every previous job into a paragraph or two rather than a sentence. It is more important to accurately describe your career history in a chronological fashion without listing every detail or daily assignment.

Two or three bullet points should highlight the most significant accomplishments you achieved in each position you have held. This exercise forces you to emphasize the truly important results you provided for your previous employers rather than offering a list of “accomplishments” that might typically be expected from anyone holding a similar position.

If you have a college degree and/or advanced degrees you should list these under “Education” at the top of your resume prior to listing your experience. If you do not wish to emphasize your education, or you do

not have an advanced degree beyond high school, you can list your career history first and follow it with your education.

**Fourth, tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.** Please don't be offended. Most people are very careful to accurately represent their career history and it is only on occasion that I see prevarication on personal resumes. But it is not a perfect world and once in a while in checking resumes I find errors, omissions or some exaggeration that makes it difficult to present an otherwise good candidate to a prospective employer.

Don't be afraid to list jobs you left because you could no longer tolerate the atmosphere or the employer could no longer tolerate you. (O.K., so you got fired!) There was a time when a prospective employer would look unfavorably on an applicant who said that he/she left a position because of a "difference of philosophy," but today most employers understand how difficult it can be to match the proper candidate with the appropriate job and will appreciate your honesty. If they don't respect your candor, you probably wouldn't want to work with them anyway.

**Fifth, include an "attaboy/girl" section.** This is the "Other Accomplishments" category on your resume and it is more important than you might think. This section of your resume is typically at the bottom of the page where both the candidate and the prospective employer usually overlook it. You should "super-charge" this part of your resume by taking the opportunity to showcase your unique accomplishments. This statement will personalize your resume by stating what you are most proud of in your career.

Use this section to trumpet any awards or recognitions you have received. This is a better use of space on your resume than listing your personal data, (date of birth, marital status, etc.) which is not necessary.

I believe if you use "The 5 Super Secrets" you will improve your competitive edge when you present your credentials to a prospective employer. Your goal should be to insure your resume is noticed and read.