



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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Update your résumé — A career priority

With the current economic climate, one of the best career steps you can take is to update your résumé. Not looking for a job? That doesn't matter. It's always a great idea to have an up-to-date résumé on hand.

Review your current document, and remind yourself that the résumé is a tool with one specific purpose — to win an interview. It should present you in the best light, and convince the employer that you have what it takes to be successful in the new position or career.

Is the format outdated? What about the information? Is it reader friendly? Electronically compatible?

Let's begin with the format. There are three basic résumé formats — chronological, functional and combination. The "chronological" format demonstrates continuing upward career growth by emphasizing employment history. This format lists job positions held in a progressive sequence beginning with the most recent and working back. The distinguishing feature of this format is that with each job listing, you communicate key responsibilities and specific job accomplishments. The focal points of the chronological format are time, job continuity, growth, advancement and achievements.

The "functional" format emphasizes skills, abilities, credentials, qualifications and accomplishments at the beginning of the document. This format does not associate these characteristics with a specific employer. Titles, dates of employment and employment track records are de-emphasized. It is important to keep in mind that some employers

prefer a chronological résumé because they believe a functional résumé may be an attempt to hide some deficiencies. My philosophy is that a functional résumé, well prepared, is still a viable job tool for a variety of situations — career changers, older workers, academic skill-level deficiencies, limited experience and employment gaps. Keep in mind that the focal point of the functional résumé is on your skills and accomplishments, not when or where you achieved them.

The "combination" format offers a quick synopsis of your key abilities and qualifications (functional format) followed by your employment history (chronological format). This is a well-accepted and effective format. The focal point is to combine the best of the chronological and functional formats. If you are a mid-life or older worker with lots of work experience, a combination résumé may be the most flexible for your needs. Even if you are planning to stay in the same field, this résumé format may be the best way to present yourself to a new employer.

Your résumé should be succinct as possible, but long enough to adequately convey your experience and qualifications. So, if you've recently entered the work force and your job experience is limited, one page will probably be plenty of room for you to spell out your background. On the other hand, if you've been in the work force for a number of years and have accumulated a variety of valuable experiences, then by all means take two pages to communicate the information. Avoid selling yourself short by eliminating impressive qualifica-

tions to try and squeeze everything on one page.

In addition to the basic information you include on a résumé, vital information an employer needs to see would be key words in your professional profile that highlight your overall background, major job responsibilities listed in broad terms, and quantified accomplishments, i.e., increased sales by "x" number of dollars, reduced costs by "x" number of dollars. It's also a good idea to explain what strategies you implemented that caused the accomplishment to occur.

Appearance of your information is significant. Since the average reading of a résumé is approximately 30-40 seconds, you want to get the best read possible. So, use a font that is easy to read. Research continues to recommend Times Roman and Arial with Times Roman being the better of the two. Point size can vary from 14 to 10 point. Ten point is the smallest you want to use; anything smaller would be difficult to read.

Technology is changing the job-search process. The Internet, e-mail, the Web, specialized computer software and scanners have opened new doors for both job hunters and employers. Since there are several options for preparing electronic résumés, I suggest that you review the many tips provided by monster.com and careerbuilder.com. Both provide excellent resources.

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