Ten Tips to Improve Resume Responses

Excerpts from an article by Dan Brockman

You can expect to receive about ten responses for every 100 resumes you send out. Some will be simple acknowledgments; some will be rejected as spam or incorrectly addressed. The remainder might be in a recruiter or human resource department inbox ready for inspection. Those reviews of the final three or four are the critical ones that will determine the effectiveness of your current job hunting campaign. These ten tips will help you get better responses.

1. **The name of your resume document should be in the form: Last, First.** Add your middle initial if your name is common. Using "resume" or "tomresume05" or such is certain to cause the recipient to lose it or lose interest because of the time-consuming step necessary to change it so it can be saved correctly. Make the document name unique to yourself. It should be in Microsoft Word format, not PDF or WordPerfect.

2. **The cover letter is basically wasted material.** No one reads cover letters with any degree of interest or attention. Make it short and to the point. You are looking for a position in a certain area and your salary needs are $. That's enough. Whether or not you're willing to relocate is good to state, as well. Any detailed information will have to be in your resume to do any good.

3. **Your resume should contain many ways that they can reach you.** Home, cell, work, alternate--these numbers must be at the top of the resume. Your home email and postal addresses are essential. Some firms search resumes by zip code. If you are a student or using a university email, then get a free hotmail or yahoo type account for your job hunting. If your email address is drinksalot@yahoo.com or similar nonsense, please pick another one instead. Try obtaining last.first@yahoo.com. It looks very professional.

4. **Pick a standard typeface.** Courier New is fine. Use any others with caution. Eliminate any bullets, arrows, or pointers in your text. No photos, no graphs, no long lists of two or three words on each line. Print it out and look at it from across the table. Is your resume too dense? Too long? Too much open space? Look at your composition critically on several different computer platforms. Send it to a couple of friends for review. Send it through a virus checker, spell checker, grammar checker, and through AOL's system, too.

5. As a recruiter with 30 years experience reading resumes, I can tell you that these **first four items are the most important** basics of increasing resume response. What follows are my personal preferences. Put your best foot forward on the resume. And it isn't that you have "23 years of experience" in some field. That is certain to cause me to hit the delete key immediately. My client companies are not interested in how many years of experience you have; they are looking for results.

6. **Results are numbers, ratios, percentages, and dollar signs of accomplishments and achievements.** Put those first. It's all we care about in the people we hire. What can they do for our business? What have they done for others?

7. **Your educational accomplishments are essential.** For younger people, they should be near the top of the resume. Others can slide that towards the end. In either case, make absolutely certain that the degree format is exactly what you received. Any degree statement has certain parts: type of degree, BA or BS. Field of degree, Accounting, Mechanical Engineering, Chemistry. Year received, 1998. Final GPA 3.1/4.0. Name of institution, city, and state. If you're thinking that this is too detailed, then you're not thinking like a reader who is looking for any reason to discard your resume. Any mistake or any fault here can be fatal.

8. **Your employer's names are not enough for readers to understand who you worked for.** With the many name changes over the last 10 years, it's hard to read much into a two- or three-word name. Put at least one sentence after the name of each employer with a description of the business they are in. Size of company, number of plants, employee union status, multiple state operations, world wide customer base. These are simple additions that can make your resume stand out.

9. The section describing what you did, found under each employer, **should contain a description of what you actually did**, not a list of duties lifted from your job description. If this short section contains the phrase "but not limited to," you can be sure I am going to delete your resume. Why? Because that is a phrase from a job description and has no place in your list of outstanding results and accomplishments. I am looking for something I can relate to your skills and abilities that might be useful to my client companies.

10. **Put a few keywords into your resume.** Many resumes are searched for keywords automatically by computer systems. You can incorporate them into your text or make a list at the end of the resume. You can skip Windows XP or Word, etc. We all expect those skills, like driving or reading English, to be exceptional. Keywords like HPLC or OSHA or MBA or CFA or GIPS might not make much sense to the casual reader, but to a counterpart who you want to work for in a new company, they are essential.

These items are culled from my long list of mistakes and misunderstandings of the purpose of a resume in today's job hunting environment. I think they will help you to achieve better results. If you think you can construct the perfect resume, send one to me for a free check-up and critique.