

10 Steps to a Killer Resume

by Rose Jonas, Ph.D.

You want a new resume to get into the job market, you need a networking tool, you're answering a want ad. Here are 10 steps to help you develop a killer resume. This will not tell you how to create a resume. Amazon.com lists 50 books, and there are more than a million samples on the Internet. This will cover what people avoid or don't do in venturing toward NewJobLand.

1. *What do you want to look like?* My main questions to clients are: "Who are you?" and "What do you want?" Once I know the job you want, the field you would like to enter, I know how to make you look. A coach never makes that decision for you; it's what clients always hope, however. "I don't know" will get you nowhere, and neither will a resume based on that.

2. *How do they do it there?* A 50-year-old man should not cram his work life onto one page. His college age child, with three part-time jobs, can. Create the resume that's expected in your industry. Most businesses are fine with two pages. Academics do six and more! Get a resume from your field, perhaps from a resume-writer like Susan Ireland who has samples on her web site, www.susanireland.com/resumeindex.htm. Do not vary from what your occupation wants. If you're in a creative field, your language can be more casual. In business, be crisp and brief. This is a marketing piece, and you're sending it to a targeted audience. If yours doesn't appeal, your work life will nestle in the waste can with undesired junk mail.

3. *Tell me a story.* In my book, *Can I Lie on My Resume?* I make the point that we love stories, and your resume is one. Follow the format in your Experiences section of "Responsibilities/Accomplishments," but put some of your life's flavor into it! Did you supervise 15 people? Did you open an international office? Did you increase sales by 100 percent over quota? Work in Nepal for the Peace Corps? Your career facts are primary, but make yourself sound like someone I want to meet. Resume readers give you about 10 seconds to make an impact.

4. *Gaps and other bad stuff.* Few people have perfect job histories, but a *lot* have gaps they lie about (and no, that's not a good idea). But you can slide with the truth. Use years to show your jobs, not months (2001 – 2007, for example). Resume readers can't tell you were out of work for nine months. If you stopped work for years to care for children, backpack in Europe, or to attend school for a career change, explain that in your cover letter.

5. *Use your Spell-check.* Before you print your completed resume, check spelling and grammar. Spell-check won't help with unique scientific or technical terms, but it can save you from spelling career as "carrer." It's a red flag. If this resume is your best work — and it should be — and you did a careless job, employers will think you'll be careless with job responsibilities.

6. *Should you do a cover letter?* BigCompany Recruiting Directors sometimes tell me cover letters will soon be forgotten, but letters keep turning up with resumes, and employers look at them. The letter shows how you communicate. Can you put sentences together? Do you have qualifications you couldn't put in the resume? Did some BigDog golfing buddy send you to the company, which gives you special consideration? Do a cover letter. If you're applying for a

specific job, say exactly how your background matches each thing they want. Make each letter unique to the job.

7. *“Send me your pretty resume.”* You may be sending your resume to CyberHell, responding to online-listed company jobs, where many apply but few receive replies. You may go to Monster, which asks you to fill in their form. If a recruiter or company representative contacts you, they will ask you to send your formal resume. It’s easier for them to read. When you do, please don’t name it “Resume.doc.” The employer will never find you unless you call it “MaryJonesResume.doc.” Give the document your name.

8. *What will you do with it?* If you see your resume as CyberPaper to be spread everywhere, don’t wait by your CyberMailbox for a reply. It won’t be there. Just because you sent a thousand doesn’t get you a good-boy cookie or a response. The best way to find a job is through other people. Print your resume on nice gray or white paper (unless you’re a creative type), and meet friends for coffee. Send it to your dad’s buddy in the choir who runs the printing company. Get advice about good places to send it; get a contact wherever you can. Yes, you will actually enclose it when you answer want ads, but you should aim to deliver most of them from your own hand. If contacts know and like you, they’ll refer you to someone else they know and like.

9. *Follow-up.* Your job isn’t done till you know what happened to your resume in the ChosenEmployer’s company. Don’t wait for them to respond. They’re overwhelmed. Keep responsibility for your resume’s progress and check in with them till they say, “You’re not a good fit for us.”

10. *Should you use a resume writer?* If you need a referral to a resume-writer, ask Wendy Enelow, Executive Director of the Career Masters Institute at wendy@wendyenelow.com. An employer can often tell when a resume writer did the work. They examine the document more carefully to get at the truth OR they move on to the next resume because the language is too off the mark with the job they have. As with your friends, be careful whom you choose.

I hope your best efforts at resume writing get you the job you want!