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**"An essential guide for the
serious job-hunter."**

-Rodney Gee, Manager of Staffing, Motorola, Inc.

STEVEN PROVENZANO

TOP SECRET Resumes and Cover Letters

The Complete Career Guide for All Job Seekers

Updated Fourth Edition

By

Steven Provenzano, CPRW/CEIP

President, ECS: Executive Career Services & DeskTop Publishing, Inc.

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For a Free Resume Analysis, send direct to the author at:

Careers1@Execareers.com

HQ: 630-289-6222

Toll Free: 877-610-6810

Resume examples by profession and order of appearance, [Chapter 10](#):

Annotated Examples:

Administrative Support / Office Management

Financial Operations

Sales or Sales Management

Retail Sales Management

Human Resources / Recruiting

Administration / Management (Entry Level)

Accounting

Elementary Teacher

Purchasing / Inventory Control

Administrative Law

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Information Technology / MIS

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Engineering / Network Operations

Engineering / Nuclear Consulting

Chemical / Powerplant Engineering

Quality Control / Engineering Research

Design Engineering

System Analyst / Programmer
IT Project Management / Technology Leadership
Manufacturing / Engineering
Telecommunications Analyst
IT / Software Development
Production Management / Technical Support
Energy Auditor: Building Analyst Professional
Purchasing / Supply Chain Administration
Chief Financial Officer
CPA: Controller / Manager
Accounting Operations
Product Development / Marketing
Production / Manufacturing Operations
Marketing / Advertising
Public Relations
Television Production / Broadcasting
Human Resources / Training and Development
Construction / Building Management
Property Management
Mortgage Banking
Management: Food & Lodging
Credit / Collections Management
Teacher
Sales Representative
Sales Management / Marketing
Sales: Pharmaceuticals

Blue and Gray Collar Positions, Skilled Trades, Entry-Level Business Positions and New Graduates:

Machinist
Molder / Shop Operations
Technical Repair / Operations

Toll and Die / EDM Programming
Tool and Die Maker / Production Operations
Traffic Coordination / Distribution Operations
Transportation Operations
Engineering / Facility Management
Switchboard / Customer Service
Paralegal / Legal Secretary
Executive Secretary
Nurse / Registered
Nurse / Registered
Counseling
Child Care Professional
Entry-Level / New College Graduate
Entry-Level / New College Graduate #2
Aircraft Mechanic / Pilot
Printing Operations / Management
Restaurant Management
Sous Chef / Head Chef
Railroad / Shipping Industry
Radiology
Flight Attendant
Architectural Design
Policeman / Chief of Police
Warehousing / Distribution
Retail Operations / Management

Veterans Returning to the Workforce:

Sales / Management: Heavy Equipment
Locomotive Engineer
Alarm Technician
Mechanical Maintenance / Repair
TSA Operations: Aviation / Law Enforcement

Direct office phones:

HQ: 630-289-6222

Toll free: 877-610-6810

CHAPTER 1

Expert Resumes: Still Required for the Digital Job Hunt

Getting Better all the Time

At the time of this writing, unemployment remains below 5%, and in just a few short years, the overall U.S. economy has made an impressive comeback. Millions are back to work, but wages still need to climb. Manufacturing is showing a resurgence, and Healthcare hiring remains relatively strong.

According to a LinkedIn article published in 2018, here are the hard skills companies need most. This was compiled using data from more than 500 million LinkedIn members, and is condensed here:

- 1. Cloud and Distributed Computing; related jobs:** Platform Engineer
- 2. Statistical Analysis and Data Mining; related jobs:** Business Analyst
- 3. Middleware and Integration Software; related jobs:** IT Manager
- 4. Web Architecture and Development Framework; related jobs:** Web developer
- 5. User Interface Design; related jobs:** UX Designer
- 6. Software Revision Control Systems; related jobs:** Web Developer
- 7. Data Presentation; related jobs:** Graphic Designer
- 8. SEO/SEM Marketing; related jobs:** Marketing Specialist
- 9. Mobile Development; related jobs:** Mobile Engineer

- 10. Network and Information Security; related jobs:** Information Security
- 11. Marketing Campaign Management; related jobs:** Online Marketing Manager
- 12. Data Engineering and Data Warehousing; related jobs:** Software Engineer
- 13. Storage Systems and Management; related jobs:** Database Administrator
- 14. Electronic and Electrical Engineering; related jobs:** Electrical Engineer
- 15. Algorithm Design; related jobs:** Software Engineer
- 16. Perl/Python/Ruby; related jobs:** Software Engineer, Data Scientist
- 17. Shell Scripting Languages; related jobs:** Linux System Administrator]
- 18. Mac, Linux and Unix Systems; related jobs:** System Administrator
- 19. Java Development; related jobs:** Java Developer, Web Developer
- 20. Business Intelligence; related jobs:** Business Intelligence Analyst
- 21. Software QA and User Testing; related jobs:** User Experience Engineer
- 22. Virtualization; related jobs:** Network Engineer / Administrator
- 23. Automotive Services, Parts and Design; related jobs:** Vehicle Engineer
- 24. Economics; related jobs:** Business Development Manager / Auditor / Research
- 25. Database Management and Software; related jobs:** Database Specialist

No matter what anyone tells you, people are getting hired every day across America. Of course, competition for good, well-paying jobs is always tough, and as companies get leaner and meaner, an equally lean and mean resume is essential to your job search.

As a former Corporate Recruiter, Career Coach and CPRW, I can confirm that your resume is your life, your career on paper, and often the first impression employers will have of your skills, experience and professional standards. If you're lucky, that piece of paper will get about 60

seconds to impress a potential employer and get him or her to call; it's gotta be perfect.

The Big Picture, in the Age of LinkedIn

Most of my resume clients are top professionals and executives. I've written resumes gaining positive response rates up to 30%, including calls from employers, interviews and new positions. This is an excellent response, but not impossible when using the writing techniques in this book.

As mentioned, up to 90% of employers are using LinkedIn profiles to find and recruit new talent. When your Profile/Skill section is written using the techniques in this book, it can be modified and used as the beginning of your LinkedIn Profile, and can dramatically increase your response rate from all types of employers.

Leveraging the tips in this book can make the difference between getting a job next week or three months from now, or between a starting salary of \$67,000 or \$82,000. I've seen this happen thousands of times with my clients.

“Basic” Vs. Effective Resumes

If you think writing a resume is simple, you're doing it wrong. Many job seekers write brief descriptions of their work history and education, use a standard MS Word or other such “resume template” software, and hope for the best. The results are usually not very good — they probably don't know what they're up against.

A typical CareerBuilder.com or Monster.com advertisement can draw hundreds, even thousands of resumes in just a few days. Research tells us most of these have only a few seconds to grab the reader's attention and get him or her to read the entire resume, let alone call you in for an interview.

When people send me their materials and ask me to write a “simple” or “basic” resume, I tell them there's no such thing. There are only resumes that are more or less effective, depending on how well they are written and utilized.

Writing a great resume becomes easier when you think of it as a discovery process. This is your chance to analyze your knowledge and

accomplishments in your chosen field and decide what direction your career should take. This process helps prepare you for interview questions and can actually create new career choices, because you may see your experience as being applicable to new positions or even whole new industries. Even in the age of LinkedIn, resumes are here to stay as a necessary part of the business world.

A resume can lead to more and better interviews, or it can cost you job opportunities. The resume game is a numbers game, and the only way to win is to out-write your competitors. Don't let someone less qualified than you get *your* interview just because he or she has a better resume!

Keeping It Real

Contrary to books that claim otherwise, a resume cannot get you a job, only you can do that. But a resume certainly can help you get decent interviews. It can also prevent you from getting a job, when it's ineffective and employers ruthlessly "weed you out" because of it. Believe me, this happens every day. Once you get some on-target interviews, the resume becomes secondary and you get the chance to sell your qualifications personally.

I encourage you to respond to advertisements as part of your job search. But keep in mind that many of the best positions are never advertised, and are filled through personal networking or referrals.

Tipster...

Personal networking is the best way to get a job. Talk with former coworkers and clients, friends and family members, and call target companies directly.

Market studies show that 70 to 80 percent of professionals get their jobs through direct or social networking (i.e. personal referrals, or sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook), about 10 percent are filled through search firms, 5 percent through mass mail/email, and only about 5 percent through the large job boards such as CareerBuilder.com or Monster.com.

Still, an excellent resume is essential for all these methods and you should always be prepared: keep five or six resumes in the back seat of

your car in a 9 x 12 envelope. Don't laugh, I found my first Corporate Recruiting job this way. You never know when you'll need an excellent resume.

Job listings may be helpful, but you may find that many pay less than what you're making now, or that you're overqualified or underqualified for them. See [Chapter 11](#), "Using Your Resume Effectively," for alternative uses of resumes.

Just What is a "Top Secret" Resume?

This book is called *Top Secret Resumes & Cover Letters* because it contains *improved and refined* writing and format secrets used by many (though certainly not all) professional resume writers nationwide.

After working for some of the nation's largest resume companies, perhaps the most valuable secret I could tell you is that while there are many excellent writers in our industry, there are some who aren't quite as good as they claim to be. Mom-and-pop shops open and close on a regular basis, and it seems everyone with a computer and time to spare is an "expert" on resumes. It's important to understand that quality of work can vary widely, just as it does in any industry.

Getting Help from a Resume Service

If you seek assistance from a resume writing or career coaching service, be sure the writer you select is not merely a typist, a printer, or someone with a background only in Human Resources or Recruiting. He or she should have written at least 1,000 resumes and should have at least five, preferably ten years of full-time experience. They should also be a CPRW; resume professionals don't do this as a sideline. The person should have at least a Bachelor's Degree or extensive training in Journalism, Writing or English, and should be able to call you personally to discuss your particular resume.

Getting an experienced writer to proofread, edit or assist with your resume can be extremely valuable. Be sure their writing techniques are at least similar to those used here. At any time throughout this process, you may send it to me directly for a free, confidential, no-obligation review.

Following your review, you may request that we write or edit your resume. At that point, we would conduct a full interview via phone, and complete a custom resume that meets your specific needs. We can also target your resume to employment services and headhunters by geographic location, industry, type of work and income desired, and send you a full list of those who receive it, complete with names and phone numbers so you can follow up. This is a great choice if you feel your resume is already as good as it can be. *If you use any of our services, we will credit you the price paid for this book.*

See the last page of this book for contact information.

Resume Style and Philosophy

The resumes in this book not only have impact and raw data; they also have a degree of style and grace, things you must keep in mind when writing your self-marketing tool. Of course, no resume guide can tell you the exact wording that'll work best for you, but these resumes demonstrate techniques I've used successfully for thousands of clients in almost every field. They are the direct result of feedback from my clients and employers, and were refined through trial and error. Not every profession is represented, but I've included a cross-section of the most common positions. Names of job hunters and companies have been changed of course, and I encourage you to check as many samples as possible for keywords and phrases to use in your resume.

If you still need help writing about yourself, you may call us during regular business hours. Because many resume guides offer conflicting advice or less effective/outdated formats, look for language related to the job you're seeking and use the formats and writing techniques presented here.

A list of active verbs is included for use in both the Profile/Skill and Employment sections, discussed later. As for adjectives, be sure to use them sparingly. When managers or personnel representatives come across vast wastelands of subjective, personal attributes or gobbledygook, they may just scan every job title you've had and look for one that vaguely matches their needs. If one doesn't catch their eye, then it's on to the next one in the stack and all that expensive paper and typesetting was for naught.

Heck, that's what I did as a Corporate Recruiter. Remember, it is always *content* that matters most, especially since most resumes are emailed. Paper, typeface and format are important, but as you'll see, they run second place to content in the mind of the reader.

CHAPTER 2

Market Your Abilities

When you're in a job search, put yourself in the employer's position and remember the basic question that runs through the mind of every one of them as they pick up (or click on) your resume:

What can *you* do for me?

If I'm an employer with hundreds of resumes sitting on my desk, why should I call you? Because you think you have a great work history? Because of the paper color or font you picked, or picture or company logo you used? This harks back to the typical Chronological (job description) style resume that was probably used by cave dwellers seeking positions as shaman or lead tiger hunter. Gimme a break.

Tipster...

As a busy executive or corporate recruiter, I don't have all day to read every little aspect about what you think is a great work history. I mostly want to know *what you can do for me*, in the here and now, for my particular operation. But all you're telling me with a Chronological resume is *what you've done for someone else*.

Of course, your work history and education are very important to your resume and must be included when applicable. Employers need to know where you worked and/or went to school, and these items must be leveraged to your best advantage.

But the “Tipster” above is really the key point of this book, and to truly understand it means taking a giant leap forward in getting more interviews with your resume, LinkedIn profile, 30-second elevator speech, etc. This advice sounds simple and obvious. Yet how many resumes have a Profile/Skill section (I sometimes also call this the Experience section in the resume examples which follow) that tells the reader in clear, no-nonsense language what skills and abilities the applicant can bring to a company? *Very few!*

At the Speed of Light

Within 30 seconds of checking your resume, employers and recruiters need to see your value, your impact, some reason to call you up that sets you apart from the crowd. Tell employers what you can do for them, and do it with style. *Don't re-hash your work history, that's already listed below.* Instead, hit them over the head with your personal, most relevant, applicable skills and abilities that you've *extracted* from your work history, education, internships, volunteer work, and so on. *Where* you gained your skills is less important than how you *develop* them on top of your resume.

Create a bridge between the top skills you can and want to use, and what most employers will need on the job. That's what the Profile/Skill section is all about. Write your resume on the premise that employers are lazy and don't want to think. Reading stacks of resumes can quickly become a tedious, dreaded task. Never trust an employer to read your entire resume. Because most resumes get so little time to impress a reader, use a two-pronged approach to tell them in no uncertain terms:

1. *In the Profile/Skill section:* Consisting mostly of *keywords*, the most applicable skills and abilities you can bring to a company that can help you learn and/or execute the position better than anyone else. Both human readers and ATS (Applicant Tracking Systems, i.e. resume tracking software) look for as many keywords as possible to scan, sort and select your resume for further review.
2. *In the Employment or Career Background section (or Education or if you really have no work history at all):* Where you applied or learned those skills and what they've achieved for previous or current

employers, volunteer groups, your family or anyone else. Here's where you use percentages, dollar amounts, numbers of staff supervised or accounts acquired, and so on.

Getting Into the Minds of Employers

Here's where you take the next giant leap in expert resume writing: getting into the minds of employers. Another way of saying this is: *Do the thinking for the employer*. Employers don't want to think about your past; they want to interview decent candidates and get someone hired, usually ASAP.

Spell out and market the skills and abilities you wish to use most *and which you think employers want to see*. Start with a personal gut check: what's going to turn you on at work 40-60 hours per week? Then research target companies, job listings, advertisements, industries and so on. This is delivered right near the top in the Profile/Skill section. Only then is it reinforced, qualified, quantified and proven by what those same talents have produced for previous employers.

Tipster...

Your new resume must be future oriented, so always keep this distinction in mind: there are skills you can bring to your new employer and duties you would like to perform (Profile/Skill section).

Then there are those duties and achievements that have taken place at previous jobs or in school (Experience, Employment and/or Education section). Isolate and market your skills apart from where they were performed; *then* back them up with company/school names, dates and so on.

Employers may wonder: Does this person know how to utilize (or program) the computer systems my company uses? Can he or she use the latest marketing databases and help increase sales? Can this applicant interpret the federal government's recent changes in statutes regarding environmental issues?

Put yourself in the employer's place and such questions get much easier to ask—and to answer. If you're a recent college graduate or have no hands-on industry experience, draw on any part-time work experience and/or

training, no matter how irrelevant it may seem (e.g., fast-food joints, retail stores, manual labor). Otherwise, set aside your lack of job experience and think about the skills you actually learned in school and sell them on top: the ability to plan and conduct presentations, research and write detailed reports, or utilize certain software (and to what extent).

See [Chapter 6](#), “Outlines for the Major Professions.” Everyone from first-time job seekers to housewives returning to the workforce to veterans and established professionals can make use of this concept to get a better position.

Tipster...

Do what most people fail to do in their resume: market all your *applicable* skills developed throughout your life experience, regardless of *where* or *why* they were performed, then show how you used them under Em-employment or Education sections when possible.

This must be done just right, or it may backfire: write about your tangible skills and forget the fluff about being “a hands-on professional with a strong desire to excel in a challenging environment” (blah, blah, blah).

Truth and substance are what employers really want and must comprehend before they call you. It’s up to you to spell all this out in your resume, and the way you do tells the reader as much about who you are as what you want from your career.

This point was driven home when I spoke with two top personnel executives at Motorola’s national headquarters in Schaumburg, Illinois.

Two Corporate Recruiters Speak Out

Rodney Gee, Manager of Staffing and Billy Dexter, Manager of University Relations for the Land Mobile Products Sector, worked at one of six sectors at Motorola Corporation. Talk about swamped—these guys received hundreds resumes per week from executives, professionals and new graduates.

“We didn’t have much time to look at a resume, so it needed structure and consistency,” said Dexter. “If a resume was too broad, we would pass it

over. Tell us about special projects, skill sets, computer languages, leadership skills and things outside the classroom. If I have to search through a resume for these items, I probably won't read it."

Your Profile/Skill section gives you control over your resume and lets you focus on the key points Dexter and Gee were looking for. If you do use an Objective, both recruiters said it shouldn't be "rosy" and "must quickly define what the applicant is looking for in one or two sentences."

Careful Omission

Of course, what you leave out of your resume is just as important as what you leave in. It's O.K. to break some rules of grammar in the interest of brevity, but limit this to sentences that take *I, we, he, she* and other pronouns for granted. Omit these words altogether. Use the abbreviated third-person voice demonstrated in the following examples. It's succinct, direct and helps you get straight to your qualifications and *market* them.

Two Qualifying Points

When space is tight or if you really must have all your qualifications on one page, you can sacrifice or reduce the Profile/Skill section in favor of applicable work experience. However, don't be afraid of a two-page resume. They are much more acceptable in these days of increased staff turnover. Besides, a two-page resume lets you use more white space and larger type, two excellent ways to increase the readability of your document.

The Profile/Skill section may be omitted for physicians or attorneys, where many employers still like to see conservative, Chronological listings of jobs and accomplishments. If you go this route, consider adding at least an opening paragraph summarizing your top skills, abilities, work experience, and perhaps some personal attributes.

Smashing Some Major Myths

Always keep in mind that people get jobs, not resumes. It's up to you to get the job through research, personal/targeted networking, effective written

and oral correspondence, and professional interviewing. And remember, a resume style that works for one person may not work for you.

An effective job search often hinges on a combination of your individual talents, your industry and the job market at any given time. I've had customers walk in with badly written resumes they claim have gotten them interviews. That's because their skills were in demand at a certain place and time and they were such a good match for the position (perhaps the applicant worked for a key competitor or was a well-known customer or business associate) that the employer didn't care so much about resume content.

However, a perfect resume is essential for *the rest of us* competing for a dearth of decent jobs in a tough economy. That is why there's really no "best" resume format or writing technique; only those that seem to work more often than others, or are tailored for certain situations. That's the type of examples I've included here. Just because a resume style or format seemed to attract interviews for your brother's friend's wife does not mean it will work for you.

Most Popular Formats

The overall *format* of most samples in this book is the *Combination* format. It is conservative, clean, direct and works best for about 90 percent of our resume clients. Those seeking positions in advertising, marketing, desktop publishing or other creative fields are encouraged to experiment with graphics, lines or other methods to show off their creativity.

The Combination format uses the best aspects of a Functional resume (achievements/abilities only, followed by job/company titles and no job descriptions) at the top, combined with a Chronological resume (job & school descriptions and no summary) near the end.

The Combination format (which usually includes a Profile/Skill section, Employment and Education sections, with bullets), is used by many resume companies, but the actual wording varies widely. Specific wordings and formats have been refined for this book.

Check many different resume examples, and start by identifying the right *keywords* that apply to your career goals and unique situation. Remember, however, that *your* custom resume isn't in this book! It remains to be created, using the ideas and examples here.

You've Just Finished your Free Sample

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