

BUILDING the LOOKING-GLASS RÉSUMÉ

*Learning to create
the reflection
that helps you
get the interview*

*Featuring
the
Jaazle®
Résumé
Template*

LARRY GOLDSMITH, CWDP, P.E.T.

Notices

Building the Looking-Glass Résumé

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1 OF COURSE YOU NEED A RÉSUMÉ



What Is a Résumé?

A résumé is a document² that you—the jobseeker—use to promote your skills, abilities, and knowledge to a potential employer. From the employer’s perspective, résumés are documents used to identify qualified candidates to invite to an interview.

Your résumé should offer employers an overview *of you* that includes your summarized talents, your employment and education histories, and summaries of your accomplishments and other relative experiences (both work and not work-related) that make you appear stronger than the other candidates.

Is it a Résumé or an Application?

The answer to this question is actually found in the answer to another simple question: Who owns the document?

Employers own applications. You must base your responses on what the employers ask.

You own the résumé. You say what you want to present yourself in the best light.

✦ **Jaazle Résumé Rule:** *Ensure that factual information such as employment dates and education descriptions match exactly.*

When employers compare applications to résumés, it is best if information that should be the same looks the same to avoid potential confusion, which can cause employers to wonder about the accuracy of your information.

Employers require applicants to complete a job or an employment application form. The application serves a legal purpose: it ensures that employers will have received uniform information from all prospective applicants. For more information, refer to chapter 5, “Résumé Styles, Types, and Related Documents.”

☑ **Tip:** *Do not wait until the last minute to complete an application.*

Get a copy of the application ahead of time. Review it and write out your responses on a scrap sheet of paper before you write on the actual application.

What is the Purpose of a Résumé?

What *you* want from your résumé might not be the same as what *employers* want. Employers want data, statistics, and personal information to help them make an informed decision. You, on the other hand, submit your résumé to win an invitation to an interview.

Employers use your résumé to determine whether you are a viable candidate—they use the résumé as a “qualifying device.” You will either be *qualified* and be granted an interview, or *disqualified* and not be considered at all.

Résumés do not generate job offers. I’ve never heard of anyone receiving a job offer based solely upon a résumé. The résumé is important, but it is just one document used as part of several steps that make up a successful job search. A job offer comes only after the completion of the entire search process.

Junk Mail or Marketing Tool?

What if you were a bug on the wall in your potential employers' offices and you could observe them opening up their computer screens to view your résumé? They glance at it for maybe 10 seconds, and they hit the delete button. Or, they slit open the envelope, glance at your résumé for that same 10 seconds then crumble it up, and toss it in their wastebaskets. Could it be that your résumé was considered junk mail?

Think for a moment. What do *you* do with junk mail? You probably crumple it up and throw it away. What do advertisers hope will happen when you receive their flyers in the mail? Clearly, they hope that you take the time to read the flyers, drive to their places of business, order over the Internet, or pick up the telephone to purchase their products or services. Advertisers try to create something in their mailers that differentiates them from the “junk mailers.”

So what is the difference between junk mail and *your* résumé? What do you hope for when you mail your résumé to an employer? You want the same thing as the advertisers. You want an employer to pick up the telephone, call you, and basically purchase you—the product—by inviting you to an interview. In other words, *your résumé is a marketing tool*. You distribute it to gain your way into an interview.

Employers will tell you the purpose of your résumé is to present your skills, abilities, and knowledge so they can make an informed decision. However, as stated previously, your intent is different from their purposes. You prepare a résumé to gain entry and secure an interview, which is why we call résumés *marketing tools*.

Learn from the business professionals, the creators of those marketing flyers you sort through in your daily mail. Advertisers do not mail you a history lesson of their lives. They don't give you 10 years' of chronological history. They mail you a promotional piece highlighting something *you need* (whether you realize or not that you need it) to get your attention.

Obviously, you cannot mail a résumé on bright, shiny paper with colorful pictures and a stream of superlatives exclaiming your greatness. You can, however, paint a picture using carefully chosen, clear concise and descriptive words that highlight your winning facts, figures, accomplishments, and achievements. And you can strengthen your writing with proper grammar. Then you can select a résumé layout that reflects your background and your personality.

✓TIP: *Present your résumé in such a way that the employer must see you.*

Your résumé is a *qualifying instrument*. It can also be a *screening device*. Don't let a piece of paper get the best of you. Help the employer make an *informed* decision.

What Goes on a Résumé?

A résumé comprises facts, statistical data, and task statements drawn from your employment history and professional background. Employers use this collection of information to qualify you as a candidate for job openings in their companies. The information presented on a résumé is used by potential employers to make informed decisions on whether your background meets the criteria established in their job descriptions. It also indicates whether you are a good fit for their businesses.

The principal information presented on your résumé should be a compilation of current

and past employment experiences. This is where you document the names of your employers, locations of employment, occupational titles, and the length of time you worked for those employers. It is also important to state your educational background and training.

However, your résumé should not only *state* when and where you worked, but should also *describe what contributions you made* during your employment. The descriptions should include results that illustrate the contributions you made to make the position and the company more successful. An effective résumé is not limited to employment and educational highlights, but will also include specific information from both your professional and personal past that further promotes your potential.

Do You Always Need a Résumé?

Absolutely, unequivocally, positively...YES! Everybody should have a résumé. Submit a résumé even when not asked. Submit a résumé even when you have completed an application and are told a résumé is not necessary—that is, if your résumé has been judged to be a quality document by someone in the field and presents you in the best light. Do not make this decision for yourself. Ask for input; speak to a professional for feedback.

How Many Résumés Do You Need?

Because no two jobs are really the same, you need more than one résumé. You may “get by” with one résumé if you are applying for the same occupational title each time. But even in this example, you should tweak your résumé to match your skills to the specific criteria listed in the position announcement.

However, if you are applying for a variety of different occupational positions, you will need a number of résumés. This also holds true if you are applying for positions in a different industry. You must always tailor your résumé specifically to each position for which you apply.

When is the Best Time to Prepare a Résumé?

The best time to write your résumé is when you *don't need it*. Don't wait until the day you read an ad and it is shouting out that it is the perfect job for you. The ad will most likely say “Submit résumé” and you won't have a résumé ready to go. It's like living in a flood zone and not beginning your safety preparation until the river rises. The stress will be too great and you will be more likely to overlook a critical item.


The best time to write your résumé is when you can step back and consider what will make you shine as the stronger candidate. However, even then, this is your *master résumé*, and it should *not* be the tailored résumé you distribute to gain entry through an interview.

Prepare a Master Résumé

A master résumé is not a résumé you send to an employer—it remains in your computer. A master résumé is a document that you use as a guide to prepare the actual résumé you need to submit for each specific position that you go after. A master résumé is deemed perfect in terms of layout, style, and format. It can even contain skillfully-crafted statements as well as accurate contact information, education, and employment histories.

However, for each position you seek, resave the master with a new title. Your personal information will remain the same. So does your employment history and education. Yet for each position you seek, you will rewrite your task and summary statements to reflect what the new advertised position describes, using facts and data that connect you and your skills with each position.

There's a fair chance that at some time you submitted your master résumé for jobs that you were interested in. Have you ever wondered why you did not get responses to those submissions? Quite likely it was because your résumé was written in advance of reading the job announcement and none of the best skill statements you listed on your master résumé fit the skills that the employers were seeking. Always remember the paramount résumé creation rule:

 **Jaazle Résumé Rule:** *Your résumé must reflect the description of the job you seek.*

A successful résumé is not a listing of your best skills. A successful résumé is like a mirror: it highlights the skills you possess that best match the skills that the employer seeks.

Unless you are applying for a position with a totally opposing occupational title, modifying your résumé should not take very long. Trying to make one master résumé fit all possible job prospects usually results in a vague, irrelevant, and unfocused document that is way too long and lacks focus.

Keep a strong master in your files, but take the time to make sure that the actual résumés you submit are a better fit for your target position. It will surely be a worthwhile investment that significantly increases your chances of winning that invitation to the interview.

Is Your Résumé Working?

Your résumé should get you interviews in your area of interest. If it does not, then it would seem that something is not working, so you'll want to consider the following questions:

- Are you distributing enough résumés?
- Are you applying for the right job titles?
- Are you sending your résumés to the right individuals?
- Does your summary or profile mirror the position announcement?
- Do your statements connect your skills to the position announcement?

The bottom line is if you are not getting interviews, make adjustments.

Don't just keep sending out the same résumé. An athlete in a slump makes adjustments; if

you're not getting the interviews, you need to make adjustments as well.

What is the Value of the First Impression?

Employers appraising résumés make immediate judgments based on what they *see* as well as what they *read*. They rely on their judgment, or gut feeling, and their business savvy. It used to be said that employers spend no more than 30 seconds scanning a new résumé; quite frankly, it's more like 5 or 10 seconds.

To better relate what this means, consider for example a time when you were out with friends at a fine dining establishment. What happened when the waiter brought your order to the table and put it down in front of you? You looked at the food and within 10 seconds decided whether it smelled good, whether the portions were adequate, and whether or not it was appealing. The possibility that you may have chosen the wrong restaurant might even have crossed your mind.

This same process applies to employers when they receive your résumé. If your résumé cannot pass this test you may never get a chance to present your actual qualifications. Knowing how to make your résumé convey the best first impression will have a powerful effect on whether you get that interview invitation. Don't forget the old adage, "*You never get a second chance to make a first impression.*"

The surest way to pass the *10-second fine-dining test* is to take your time preparing your résumé. Securing that new position could be a life-changing event, right? So contrast to the fine-dining test, you would likely take a closer look and invest more time when dealing with any crucial life step—such as buying a home or car.

Creating the right résumé to make the best first impression is not much different. You should invest as much time working on your résumé as you would on any important event. But then we get back to the issue of creating a competitive résumé being a huge, time-consuming chore, right? Not necessarily. That's where Jaazle steps in to lend a hand. We'll come back to that in just a bit.

Is Your Résumé a Career Obituary?

I call most résumés I critique *career obituaries* because they speak to the past and do not make the jump to the future. In other words, the résumés do not focus on what the employer is seeking. The majority of résumés are a chronological list of work history with the focus mostly limited to company names, dates of employment, and job titles.

Employers are not mind readers. You must make it clear on your résumé how your skills match what they seek. Employers advertise to fill a need. I call it the "Big Hurt." Their "Big Hurt" is a problem, and they are trying to fix something by finding the right employee.

Be very careful not to make your résumé a recollection of things dead and gone. Make it a living reflection that points out how you can fix your prospective employers' problems.

What Makes a Résumé Good?

A lot goes into preparing a good *résumé*. But let's first define "a good *résumé*." A good *résumé* is one that works: it gets you the interview. It really is as simple as that!

I once saw a "résumé" that was two sentences long. It said:

I am the senior installer for ABC Company. Are you interested?

Is this a good résumé? Not by my standards. But you know what? It worked! The individual sent out five of these résumés, received three interviews, and one job offer.

Many factors must be addressed to create a good *résumé*, but here are a few key suggestions that really work. Keep in mind as many of these points as possible when creating your *résumé*.

Your *résumé* should provide:

1. Clarity on the type of position you seek.
2. A connection of your background and talents to the position being advertised.
3. An employment history that shows progression, growth, and increased responsibility.
4. Continual education that shows you are up on current trends and technology.
5. Stated results reflecting achievements and outcomes.
6. An error-free and properly-formatted professional image.

Your *résumé* should also make you feel good just by looking at it. Remember the first impression factor.

Should You Employ a Professional Résumé Writer?

If you are confident in the strength of your information gathering and writing, you should be able to use the advice in this book and the Jaazle template and process to create a strong professional *résumé*. Jaazle takes care of the organization and formatting issues, so all you have to focus on is the content.

If you're still feeling overwhelmed by the challenge of creating your own professional looking *résumé*, you should consider using a qualified *résumé* writer.

☑TIP: *Be cautious and choose wisely when seeking résumé help.*

Most people think of themselves as "résumé experts." Be cautious when asking a friend, a family member, or a colleague about the quality of your *résumé*. Evaluating a *résumé* is subjective and reviewers can become very opinionated, increasing the chances that you will receive a slanted view.

Some *résumé* services/writers are good at taking your information and laying it out in an organized manner. And most *résumé* specialists can help you avoid costly grammar and spelling mistakes.

True professional *résumé* writing services not only give you an organized structure with attractive formatting and mechanically accurate content, they also write *focused statements* that sell your talents and present you as the ideal candidate. Most importantly, they know how to connect your skills, knowledge, and abilities with those that the employers seek; and they serve as that unbiased third party whose only focus is to deliver

a professional, competitive document.

I remember speaking with some business acquaintances. They were complaining about their accountant. It seems he was the perfect accountant with regards to preparing their tax forms, maintaining filing dates, and correctly performing a variety of bookkeeping functions. However, my business friends needed more leadership during that period. What they really needed from their accountant was advice and direction with fiscal and financial guidance. In this example, their business needs were more than just accounting services.

The same issues apply to choosing a professional résumé service or a professional résumé writer. What my friends had with their accountant was not a good fit for their business during this period. So, make a list of what you need, and then choose a résumé service that will meet your needs.

Apply Critical Thinking

It is essential that you *fully, totally, and unequivocally* understand and internalize the four points laid out in this section. Critical thinking is a manner through which you master your thoughts in order to select the right words, and write the proper message that will persuade your potential employer to say, “*We must meet this person. The skills, achievements and accomplishments exactly match what we state in the job description.*”

Applying the principles of critical thinking will significantly increase your chances of securing the interview (and position) that you seek.

Below is an example of critical thinking applied to the résumé writing process, and more specifically to writing the task statements that must accompany your résumé. Follow these four steps to help prepare a successful résumé:

1. Make a list of the vital concerns and issues raised in the position announcement.

Company needs an individual with highly-polished sales closing skills.

2. Convert your findings into clear and concise probing questions.

What have I done in my background that would demonstrate this ability?

3. Interpret your questions effectively to reach sound conclusions and solutions. Draw from your education, training, and experiences. (You can use the pronoun “I” here to gather your thoughts, but leave it out of the actual statements you write on your résumé.)

Earlier in my career I sold school and municipal bonds by convincing school superintendents and city managers that my firm could bring increased value for their bonds.

I have earned three certificates from one of the most respected sales training schools in the country.

I am a compelling and win-over sales professional. My success has helped make my company tops in its field.

4. Then, express your solutions on your résumé so employers will know by what you have written that you have the ability to bring solutions to complex issues.

Managed multiple, complex bond campaigns—some with values exceeding 50 million dollars. Over a seven-year period, represented the most respected universities and communities in Ohio to become the number three bond seller in the United States.

So essentially, critical thinking in this case means looking at all the material you can put on your résumé then carefully and honestly deciding how to present that information in a reflective manner that solves a prospective employer's problem.

² This document can be paper, electronic, posted on the internet or in any other format that is acceptable to the potential employer.

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