



100 Components of an Exemplary Résumé:

HOW DOES YOUR RESUME FARE?

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*D*id you know that a full 98 percent of the general public prepares their résumé incorrectly?



That's because résumé writing is both an art and a science that takes even professional résumé writers years to perfect.

Job seekers generally do not target their résumés precisely to the positions they seek, match their qualifications with the position requirements, incorporate all of the relative résumé keywords, showcase their benefits and achievements to prospective employers, and a host of other things. And—*most importantly*—they do not know how to brand themselves.

Personal Branding is by far the most crucial and successful way to get hired. Your cover letter should include your personal brand message—a “wow” factor in of itself that will compel hiring managers to call you—because it includes five critical components: your (a) assets / features, (b) benefits, (c) competitive edge, (d) value propositions, and (3) return on investment to your prospective employers. And your résumé should back it up with related achievements.

These and other areas are critical to demonstrate to prospective employers how suitable of a candidate you are for them.

If your résumé and cover letter are well crafted, it will help you increase your interview odds manyfold, heighten your confidence level, gain renewed enthusiasm for the job search, feel empowered in the interview stage, land the position you seek sooner, and obtain your highest salary potential possible. Including your personal brand message will help put you in the *top 2 percent* of candidates considered for positions.

The following list of résumé requirements for successful résumés focuses on all of the critical résumé and cover letter areas to help you make your “*Me Presentation*” the best it can be in order to maximize your interview odds and salary potential. As a professional résumé writer, these are the areas I personally include in all of my clients’ résumés.

If you’d like to go about crafting your résumé and cover letter on your own, I’ve also included the chapters in my *Step-by-Step Résumés* and *Step-by-Step Cover Letters* books as to where to find the help you need in each area in a step-by-step fashion. If not, seek a Professional Résumé Writer who is also a Personal Branding Strategist to help you.

A. Overall Targeted Résumé and Cover Letter Strategy

A building is only as strong as the foundation on which it sits. Similarly, résumé strategy is key in developing your résumé to ensure it is a success. The correct résumé format should be used, your overall résumé should precisely target the position for which you seek, any "red flags" must be skillfully handled, and it should portray how you can help prospective employers reach their goals.

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

1. Résumé and cover letter target prospective employers' needs with matching qualifications and demonstrate a fit between your qualifications and their needs. (Research required to view related job descriptions.)
2. Correct résumé format (Chronological, Functional, Combination, or CV) is used for your situation.
3. Most important (targeted) information is contained in the top one-third of your résumé.
4. All of your key transferable skills (skills used in one profession or position than can be transferred over to another) are included in your cover letter and résumé.
5. No employment gaps are evident or are skillfully handled.
6. Work history goes back 10 or, max, 15 years (if relative experience cannot be shown in the past 10 years).
7. Employment related to your targeted profession is documented under "Professional Experience." Any earlier, unrelated experience is listed under "Earlier Career Development," "Additional Experience," or "Other Employment" at the end of your résumé.
8. "Red flags" are omitted or tactfully handled by turning them into assets wherever possible.
9. Résumé plays up strengths and minimizes weaknesses.
10. Unrelated jobs include targeted job functions wherever possible. (Example: Someone applying for a railroad conductor might include customer service and money handling functions in an unrelated position.)
11. Activities, hobbies, professional affiliations, and/or special interests are included when relative and omitted when not.
12. Promotions are handled well and demonstrate progressive experience in your field.
13. Résumé incorporates all relevant information and omits or de-emphasizes irrelevant information.
14. All résumé and cover letter components meet strict Résumé-Writing Standards.
15. Ensure that all pertinent qualifications (those targeted to your goal) are included.

*For help in this area: Résumé Strategizing and Personal Assessment are addressed in STEP #2 of Step-By-Step Résumés: Build an Outstanding Résumé in 10 Easy Steps.**

B. Your Cover Letter

Your Cover Letter, if written well in marketing-savvy language, will attract your audience to want to read your résumé and can even compel prospective employers to call you in for an interview based on your cover letter's content alone.

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

16. The first paragraph attracts your audience via your personal brand message (your assets, benefits, competitive edge, value proposition, and return on investment) or other "wow" factor.
17. First paragraph also includes position sought and where heard of.
18. The second paragraph explains what you have to offer through your matching qualifications and value proposition.

19. The third paragraph validates your value proposition by summarizing your related achievements.
20. The fourth (optional) paragraph sparks additional interest via a related story or eye-opening comment that shows hiring managers why you are interested in the position.
21. The last paragraph closes with a statement of interest, includes your call-to-action, and thanks the reader.
22. Overall cover letter uses benefit-driven sentences to entice the reader to want to read your résumé, and if it's a really good cover letter, to call you in for an interview before even reading the résumé.
23. Shows how you are a match for a position opening by including all of the requirements in the original job posting and noting your expertise and qualifications in these areas.
24. Portrays how you can help prospective employers reach their goals with an explanation of how your assets and benefits can serve the firm.
25. Provides a human touch for the person behind the piece of paper so hiring managers can envision you in their firm performing the position they need filled.
26. Cover letter should be kept to within one page (4 to 5 paragraphs work well).
27. Summarizes your major achievements in brief statements, substantiates how you can be an asset to their firm, and sells you as a qualified candidate based on your experience, education, skills, and qualifications.
28. Entire cover letter is written in marketing-savvy language with persuasive statements that make hiring managers want to meet with you, including many employer benefits.
29. States what your return on investment is to prospective employers if they were to hire you.
30. Includes all of your primary industry-specific keywords. (Check Job Descriptions found on the Internet for your position title, and include all keywords in which you have experience.)
31. Includes specific ways you might be able to help the prospective employers.
32. Contains any additional compelling information as to why this particular field or position is important to you.

*For help in this area, all paragraphs within the Cover Letter are addressed in Step-By-Step Cover Letters. See also STEP #7 of the Step-By-Step Résumés book.**

C. Professional Summary Section

The "Professional Summary" section is an encapsulated first paragraph of your résumé that states what you have to offer in concise format. The purpose of this section is to match your qualifications with your prospective employers' requirements, to demonstrate you are a good fit for the position you seek, and to invite the reader in to want to read the rest of your résumé.

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

33. "Professional Summary" is well constructed and summarizes your experience in a nutshell (one to two paragraphs works well).
34. Includes your Personal Brand Message (your assets, benefits, competitive edge, value proposition, and return on investment).
35. Invites the reader to want to read the rest of your résumé.
36. States your targeted position in the first sentence (so it is not necessary to include an "Objective" section in your résumé).
37. All primary targeted skills, attributes, and qualifications are included.
38. Primary personal attributes are included within your "Professional Summary" section.
39. Matches your qualifications with the prospective employers' requirements to demonstrate you are a good fit for the position you seek.

40. Includes all of the primary keywords for the targeted position.
41. Contains heavy-hitting, marketing-savvy, and impactful statements.
42. Includes good use of varied sentence types that entice reader to want to read the rest of your résumé.

*For help in this area, Professional Summaries are addressed in
STEP #5 of the Step-By-Step Résumés book.**

D. Résumé Keywords (Areas of Expertise Section)

Many firms scan in résumés to search for all relative keywords that match the targeted position opening to see if you are a qualified candidate. The purpose of including résumé keywords is to pass the first electronic screening of your résumé so that it is put in the hands of a hiring manager. If your résumé does not include all relative keywords, it may not be read or even seen by a human.

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

43. All related keywords are including in list form under an “Areas of Experience” section of your résumé right under your “Professional Summary” section.
44. Infuses all the important industry-specific keywords for your profession within your résumé and cover letter.
45. Profession-specific keywords are included within responsibility bullets wherever applicable.
46. Targeted and transferable skills are also included.
47. All technical skills / computer proficiencies pertinent to position are identified and included.

*For help in this area, Résumé Keywords are addressed in
STEP #1 of the Step-By-Step Résumés book.**

E. Professional Experience Section: Job Responsibility and Achievement Bullets

Most job seekers who prepare their own résumés just list their job functions under each employer. That's what job descriptions are for. Your résumé, on the other hand, must showcase how well you accomplished these job functions in order to demonstrate that you are a qualified candidate for the position, or it will not generate many interviews. Achievements are by far the most important part of your résumé (and when done correctly, will target the position you seek, include all relative keywords, and showcase measurable employer benefits).

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

48. Job years are placed to best advantage (before job title if there are no employment gaps; tucked at end of employment line if gaps area evident).
49. Primary profession-specific bullets start with responsibilities that target the position you seek.
50. Action verbs are used (in their natural sequence) to start each résumé bullet (such as "Develop, implement, and monitor...").
51. Résumé bullets for each position are in good sequential order (most relevant bullets appear first, companion bullets thereafter, less important bullets last) relative to the targeted position you seek.
52. Wherever possible résumé does not show job hopping. Jobs held for less than a year can be omitted if unrelated to position sought and no employment gap (in years) is shown.
53. The number of jobs included in your résumé does not exceed 5, or when there are more, they are categorized differently to give the look of 5 or less.

54. Job promotions are included and skillfully handled and/or progressive experience in your field is evident, if applicable.
55. Management or supervisory bullets, if applicable, are included to demonstrate how well you can lead, manage, and train and develop a staff.
56. Bland job function bullets are converted into action-packed **CAR** (*Challenge-Action-Result*) achievement statements. They state the challenge you were faced with, the action you took to meet that challenge, and the benefits your employer derived from your efforts.
57. Job functions are quantified with measurable employer benefits (how much, how many, how big, how fast, how well, how often, percentages, and dollar amounts).
58. Current and most relevant positions contain the most bullets; older and less relevant positions contain fewer bullets.
59. Bullets are worked up comprehensively so anyone who reads your résumé has a full understanding of what you accomplished.
60. Each achievement bullet is concisely edited down to its "lowest common denominator" so it is impactful and does not leave out any important content.
61. Bullet line length is varied from one to three (or four-if necessary) lines throughout.
62. Résumé includes a "Key Accomplishments" section when achievements are many (such as for Executives and technical positions).

*For help in this area, Job Responsibility & Achievement Bullets are addressed in STEP #s 3, 4 & 6 of the Step-By-Step Résumés book.**

F. Résumé Format and Design

For your résumé to stand out and be read, it must first attract interest. Using graphic elements and rules and a résumé format and design that invites the reader in will help it to stand out from your competition and get read.

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

63. Résumé immediately attracts attention through exceptional formatting and design that helps it stand out from your competition and entices the reader to want to read your résumé.
64. Incorporates effective marketing, design, and presentation strategies.
65. Résumé design is suitable for your profession and targeted market.
66. Placement of most important information (that which targets your audience and the position you seek) is in the top one-third of your résumé.
67. Job titles clearly indicated (bold and in caps).
68. Proper use of fonts and font sizes has been applied for headings and body copy.
69. There is good organization and division of material and content flows well.
70. Important information is bold-faced (section titles, job titles, employers).
71. There is sufficient white space around content so résumé does not look crowded.
72. Individual pages end with full paragraphs, or better, full positions.
73. Spacing is consistent throughout and formatting looks professional.
74. Résumé sections organized and titled well (Professional Summary, Areas of Expertise, Key Accomplishments, Professional Experience, Education, etc.).
75. Contact information is clear and readable (be sure to verify accuracy).

*For help in this area, Résumé Format and Design is addressed in STEP #10 of the Step-By-Step Résumés book.**

G. Education & Training

All relative education and additional training are important to include in your résumé. The way your education is presented plays an important part in your résumé.

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

76. Education includes college or university name, town and state, and degree received (or related coursework, if none).
77. Include Grade Point Average if 3.0 or above or GPA in major when overall GPA is less than 3.0 and it is higher. Otherwise omit GPA altogether.
78. Year of completion included if within the past 10-15 years; omitted if earlier in life.
79. All Degrees included except when both a Bachelor's and Associate's Degree have been attained, in which case the Associate's Degree can be omitted.
80. When a new grad, education belongs up front. When experience is more relative than education, education belongs towards the end of the résumé.
81. Any additional training you received related to your targeted position is included in your résumé. Include training course titles and where received. Add years attained if recent.

H. Résumé Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling, and Editing

There are few—if any—excusable mistakes allowable in a résumé. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are not any of them. Many firms toss résumés with misspellings and misuse of grammar and punctuation. Be sure your résumé has no typos and each sentence flows well.

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

82. Information is comprehensive but concise; one gets a complete understanding of what you are capable of and have achieved in your career as it has been explained well.
83. Résumé is edited down without losing content. Every word counts.
84. Your résumé does not include any personal pronouns. ("I," "me," and "my" are understood and do not belong in résumés.)
85. Action verbs start off each résumé bullet and are used correctly (unless they are preceded by an adjective to show how well you handled that function). Such as "Finitely edited..."
86. Redundant or superfluous words are eliminated.
87. Irrelevant information is removed/not evident.
88. Bullets are prioritized within each position in order of their importance to the targeted profession.
89. Quantifying information (in numbers preferably) is included wherever possible.
90. Descriptive adjectives or adverbs are included, but not overused.
91. Your résumé and cover letter contains powerful, persuasive marketing phrases.
92. Personal information (marriage status, children, etc.) is left out.
93. Engages reader and maintains interest through well-written content, compelling copy, and concise editing.

*For help in this area, Résumé Editing is addressed in STEP #9 of the Step-By-Step Résumés book.**

I. Personal Branding

Personal Branding is critical in today's world of work. It sets you apart from your competition and actually helps put you in the top 2% of candidates who are called for interviews and receive job offers. Learn what it is and how to use it.

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

94. In today's world of work, your cover letter must include all elements of your personal brand: assets, benefits, competitive edge, value proposition, and return on investment.
95. Your personal brand message is finitely written and edited and makes a "wow" statement in your cover letter.
96. Your résumé must back up your personal brand with matching achievements.
97. There is good use of Visual Branding (Occupational Icon™, graphic elements, charts, graphs, work samples, etc.) contained within your résumé and cover letter.
98. There is good use of Verbal Branding (slogan, testimonials, mission statement, success stories, case studies, etc.) included in your cover letter and résumé.
99. When you read your finalized résumé and cover letter, you say "Wow! I'd hire me!"
100. Get a professional résumé critique to ensure you have left no stone unturned in making you shine.

*For help in this area, Personal Branding is addressed in-depth in STEPS #1 and 2 of the Step-by-Step Cover Letters Book and STEP #8 of the Step-By-Step Résumés book.**

**Step-by-Step Résumés: Build an Outstanding Résumé in 10 Easy Steps! by Evelyn Salvador (JIST Publishing)
Step-by-Step Cover Letters: Create Your Cover Letter in 10 Easy Steps Using Personal Branding by Evelyn Salvador (JIST Publishing) Both are available online and in all major bookstores.*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Evelyn Salvador, NCRW, JCTC is an award-winning career management industry leader who has catapulted the careers of thousands of job seekers since 1990. She is a Nationally Certified Résumé Writer and an Internationally Certified Job and Career Transition Coach as well as a Personal Branding Strategist and Marketer. Evelyn's expertise spans all career management disciplines including résumé writing, personal branding, social networking, online identity building, web résumé development, career coaching, and more.

If you'd like to forge ahead and write your own résumé and cover letter, use the *Customized DIY Resume Writing Kit* featured on Fox News available at CareerCatapult.com (click on "Job Seekers"). If you'd like Evelyn to critique your résumé, email it to her along with a Visa, MasterCard, or Discover payment of \$39 (send to CareerCatapult@aol.com). To have Evelyn write your resume or to obtain any career management services you need, visit CareerImageBuilders.com. Or you can call Evelyn directly at **(631) 698-7777** for any of the above.

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