Strategic Contract Resources

Preparing to Write Your Resume

Today's Effective Resume: A Reflection of You

Imagine having less than a minute to convince a perfect stranger to meet you about the job of your dreams. You'd want to make the best impression possible, wouldn't you? One of the most effective ways to get a job interview is by having a well- designed resume- one that clearly, concisely, and strategically presents your qualifications. A powerfully written resume and cover letter can definitely make the difference between your success and failure in the job market. It should also make you feel self-confident about your capabilities throughout the job search.

The challenge is learning how best to present your skills and related qualifications. If you're like most people, you've been searching for an easy way to write a resume that will get you interviews and give your career momentum.

But first let's make sure that we have your basic information correct.

- YOUR EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS. Where did you attend college? What did you major/minor in? Why did you choose to study what you did?
- YOUR CAREER TO THIS POINT. Where have you been? What work experiences do you have? What are some of your biggest and/or most important work-related and personal accomplishments?
- YOUR INTERESTS. The advantage of telling employers about your interests is that they can indicate a skill or an area of knowledge that is related to your career goal(s). For example, someone looking for a position in a public relations office might describe his or her interest in photography. Hobbies can also be an effective way of conveying your well roundedness to employers.

*What you need to know before you start composing your resume…*Effective commercials always target a specific audience to generate sales. What good would it do to market a convertible to people over sixty, when all they really want is a safe, reliable car for taking their grandchildren to the park? The same is true of resumes: You can't expect an employer to hire a bricklayer when he or she really needs a computer programmer. You must give some thought to the audience of your resume. Usually, the person reading the resumes is the person who will be doing the hiring. This is the person who is responsible for the bottom line productivity of the organization you hope to be a part of. And, this is someone who cares deeply about the quality of the work that will be done. This is

also the person to whom you should target your resume. Put yourself in their shoes: What would they want to know about a prospective employee? What would get them interested in and even excited about meeting you?

> The first thing you need to do is get clear what an employer is looking for and what you have to offer him or her.

*Finding out what employers want…*If you're seeking a job in a field you know well, you probably already know what would make someone a superior candidate. But, if you aren't sure, you can gather clues from want ads and people presently employed in that field; ask your friends and family if they know someone who does or has done this job. You could even contact an employer and ask him or her what would make someone an ideal candidate for the position. This information is vital for writing a resume that markets you to prospective employers. You can use it to tailor your skills and abilities to match the requirements of the position you're seeking.

*Figuring out what you have to offer…*If you're like most people, this is the hardest part about writing a resume. It's often difficult to see connections between the things you have done and the things an employer is looking for. You have knowledge and experience of all sorts, but an employer wants to see your qualifications. They want to learn about your marketable skills and characteristics, which means you need to learn how to brag…

Strategic planning is crucial to creating a resume that works. This is true for two major reasons. First, you have a very short time-usually no more than 15 to 30 seconds-and limited space-only one page(maximum of two pages)-to let the person reading your resume know your qualifications. Frequently a resume won't get an employer's attention unless it is properly organized. This means it must be strategically planned so that it emphasizes your strengths while minimizing your weaknesses.

Identifying your marketable skills and characteristics

Every person is valuable to his or her employer and plays a critical role in his or her respective position. Identifying your talents and what makes you unique is the first step in writing an effective resume. Writing a resume is no time to be modest. It's the time to highlight your value so others can understand what you could contribute to their organizations. It's critical that your resume shows you possess the skills required in the position you're pursuing.

Strategic Contract Resources

Your Skills and Your Job Search Focus

Once you have identified your skills or strengths, look for ways to highlight them. The value of self-management skills is obvious and all employers are looking for motivation and dependability. The key is to relate your strengths to your accomplishments. Employers are looking for indicators of future performance based on past performance.

Look for ways that your skills transfer to employment opportunities. If you decide to pursue these opportunities, then your next challenge is to find effective ways to present these skills to a potential employer.

Goal setting is an important part of a successful job search. It is critical that you take the time to establish clear job search goals. This takes research and an honest self-assessment.

Focus on the job that you plan to pursue right now. Your immediate need for employment should be a step in your long-term career plans.

As you explore your job search goal, you will be considering criteria for the ultimate job. **You will be reaching for the best.** Throughout the process, a healthy dose of reality is important. Remember that your goals must be attainable. If you find your dream job is not immediately achievable, reevaluate and plan the steps to achieve your goal. Secondary job goals are often among these steps. A secondary goal may include part-time, temporary, evening, or contract employment. It may be an opportunity for advancement or self-employment. It may be short-term employment while you pursue other opportunities. Whatever the case, consider secondary goals early in your job search.

The Goal Identification Worksheet and Values Checklist in Section 1 will help you explore your values and establish your employment goals. Another useful activity is to return to the list of your skills and mark those that you would--and those you would not like to use in future employment.