

Update Your Outdated Resume

MAKE SIMPLE IMPROVEMENTS TO SHOWCASE YOUR UNIQUE VALUE

By Maribeth Gunner Pulliam

Although some basics remain the same, resume trends change and you need to change with them to remain competitive. Dusting off your resume and adding the most recent employment experiences will not suffice. To open doors in the workforce today, resumes should reflect a fresh, modern look with certain contemporary elements. Try these suggestions to rejuvenate your resume.

OPTIMIZE THE TOP: The top portion of your resume is prime real estate. A hiring manager will scan this first, allotting only about 6–8 seconds for reading, so the content must count. Include your complete contact information. Your full name should be set apart in a large readable font. In addition to your name, email, phone, and address, add your LinkedIn profile, online portfolio, or personal website address if you have one. Most employers will screen candidates on social media, so be a step ahead: maintain a polished, professional account, and provide the URL. If you are still holding onto an AOL, Hotmail, or Yahoo email account, consider acquiring a more widely accepted Gmail account. The others are often viewed as dated, and do not lend a tech-savvy impression. Finally, if you have an email address that is quirky or unprofessional, change it to convey a business tone.

REPLACE YOUR OBJECTIVE: Rather than using an aspirational career objective at the top of your resume, focus on what you can do for an organization. A succinct Summary of Qualifications offers a more eclectic overview of your strengths, highlighting



areas of expertise, experience, and core skills in several brief bullets. Not only does this approach pinpoint your specific qualifications that align with the needs of the organization, it also provides more latitude to showcase your personal brand.

CUSTOMIZE FOR THE JOB: Avoid using the “one-size-fits-most” approach and tailor your resume to each job you’re applying for so there is a clear match between your qualifications and the position requirements. Read the job posting carefully to identify unique phrasing, key terms, and skill sets that are being sought. Include these key words in your resume by integrating them within the professional summary and the work experience section. Key words are also necessary to get past the applicant tracking software many companies use to weed out unqualified applicants. If enough correct words are detected, the system sends on those who qualify for staff review. Without the right key words, your resume may be rejected before human eyes ever see it.

INCLUDE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Simply listing your duties and responsibilities will not effectively reflect your past performance. Accomplishment statements capture your unique contributions and underscore your positive impact in the workplace. Quantify your information whenever possible with results-oriented statements. Describe how you applied your skills and achieved goals.

Did you improve an office process? Were you a team leader? Did you reduce costs for the company? Replace those drab descriptors with accomplishment statements that highlight your achievements, and don’t forget to weave in those important key words along the way.

MAKE YOUR EDUCATION WORK FOR YOU: The education section on your resume can be an advantageous way to outshine your competitors. Placement of your educational credentials depends on your current career status and what you want to emphasize. If you’re a recent graduate, or a career changer with a more current credential that supports your transition, lead with education at the top. If you have had a steady career path, place the education closer to the bottom of your resume. Graduation dates are not necessary unless you are a recent college graduate with no professional experience. Unfortunately, listing the dates can work against you as you progress in your career. Ideally, the employer is most concerned about the degree, not the date.

PAY ATTENTION TO FORMATS AND FONTS: Employers will give less than 20 seconds to review your resume, so keep it organized, legible, and easy to navigate. Stay away from densely packed text, too many mixed font types and sizes, and lengthy paragraphs. Make sure there are no typos. Use bullets and proper spacing. The goal is to create an aesthetically attractive, uncluttered, formatted resume with easy readability.

With these few revisions, you can easily transform your resume into a more modern, well-crafted resume that will clearly illustrate your value, bring you to the forefront, and increase your employability. ■

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