



7 Free Tips for Writing Winning Résumés

Companies invest time and bucket loads of money into developing persuasive copy and advertising material to sell their services and products. Yet the average job seeker pays scant regard to the most important marketing document they possess, namely their résumé. Your résumé is the **ONLY** physical, tangible representation of who you are, both before and after an interview.

Even in times of economic prosperity, the difference between a successful job seeker and a less successful job seeker, is that the successful job seeker spends a great deal of time, or money into developing a résumé, that captivates the essence of the **VALUE** they offer, and in a way that will differentiate them from their competition.

An outstanding résumé will ensure your ultimate success:

- ✓ You will get invited to more interviews
- ✓ You will position yourself above your competition (even above other candidates that are more qualified than you)
- ✓ You will get the readers interest, so the potential employers are eager to meet you in person
- ✓ You will create a strong framework for a higher level of remuneration, or better working conditions

Having worked with candidates at all levels from both the public and private sector, I see countless qualified job seekers, churning out lousy résumés, that screams under-par, lack of intelligence and lack of experience, which in turn is detrimental to their job search and career aspirations.

However, the good news is - that with just these 7 tips below, you will have a better understanding of how to create a sizzling résumé, that could **double** your chances of being selected for an interview.

Carolyn Smith

Certified Master Resume Writer

Certified Expert Resume Writer

Authorised DISC Consultant

Job Search Coach

Certified Job Interview Coach

carolynsmith.com.au

E: carolyn.smith@impactwriting.com.au

W: <http://carolynsmith.com.au>

**Author: How to GET IN and GET PROMOTED in the Public Service Sector
Selection criteria Secrets Exposed**

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For Team Leaders, managers, Professionals and Executives wanting to attract better job opportunities, obtain an ideal role or promotion and get paid what they are worth.

Tip 1 - Say good riddance to the career objective

In the past, career objectives were the 'hot item' in résumés and were incorporated in almost every career document around town. This tradition is still evidenced in countless résumés I receive, along with the continuing use of career objectives within résumé templates that you can find online at job search sites such as Career One, and Seek.

While a good career objective provides YOU with a fantastic focus, **it does absolutely nothing to sell you to a potential employer.** Why? The simple fact is, that a career objective is usually bland, broad and uninspiring and the focus is on YOU, not the employer's needs. Take this career objective for example:

Objective

"To have a successful career within a strong and stable corporate organisation, and to be engaged in a new and challenging role that offers job satisfaction, whilst allowing me to advance and become an effective and valued team member"

When you read this, do you actually know what industry or sector this candidate is from or more importantly, why is the focus of the statement on the need of the candidate, rather than the employer?

In short, make sure you understand the following:

Résumés are marketing documents and to market yourself effectively you need to focus on the employer's needs!

So while your objectives and career aspirations are important, they are only important to YOU. Quite frankly most employers don't give a toss about your career aspirations, unless they happen to marry up perfectly with their requirements. **The reality is that they are after a recruiting solution** and employers are really not that interested in your career ambitions.

And let's face it everyone wants to work for a "dynamic employer, with a great atmosphere, plenty of perks, challenges galore and a stack load of cash, after a few cold beers on a Friday arvo". But your wants and the wants of almost every job seeker out there have nothing to do with what the employer requires.

So instead of inserting a career objective - put the space to better use, by inserting a strong profile that provides an overview of what **'VALUE'** you can provide any future employer.

Tip 2 - Use the first person narrative

Avoid using the third person narrative. Use the first person narrative, omitting the "I". For example:

Before:

- ~ *I managed the office and workshop, including 6 staff comprising of 4 technicians and 2 office administrators.*
- ~ *I was instrumental in increasing sales by 20%*

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After:

- ~ *Managed the office and workshop, including 6 staff comprising of 4 technicians and 2 office administrators.*
- ~ *Instrumental in increasing sales by 20%*

Tip 3 - Incorporate key words

Keywords are those words that signal to the employer that you have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to match the job requirements. By incorporating those words most relevant to the position, when employers scan your résumé, they will make an appropriate connection between your keywords and requirements of the position, which in turn will identify you as an appropriate candidate.

Key words are also **VITAL in relation to computerised job searches**. If you are going online and using your résumé in the private sector, make sure you incorporate key words into your résumé, so databases and other electronic selection methods will identify you as a relevant candidate.

The most common types of keywords that signal to employers that you have the relevant background are:

- ~ Job titles
- ~ Skills related to the position
- ~ Jargon/Technical terms

For example:

Job Description:

The Operations Manager is accountable to the Director of Engineering and Environmental Services for the progression of the asset management strategies of the Mater Health services. Maintenance of infrastructure including maintenance planning, condition assessment, asset register, statutory compliance, budgets are key components.

Key words that should be incorporated into the résumé

- ~ Operations manager
- ~ Asset management
- ~ Strategy
- ~ Maintenance
- ~ Infrastructure
- ~ Planning
- ~ Condition assessment
- ~ Asset register
- ~ Statutory compliance
- ~ Budgets

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Tip 4 - Choose the best presentation format

There are quite a few options available when choosing a résumé format, the most common being the chronological, functional and combination.

Chronological Résumé

This format presents your employment history in reverse chronological order, with the most recent position first, followed by previous positions. This format is the most common one utilised and is usually preferred by employers, including selection panels in the public service sector.

The advantage of this type of formatting is it enables you to show steady progression in your career.

The disadvantage of this formatting is that it highlights unstable careers, job hopping, employment gaps and over and under qualified candidates (hence its popularity with recruiters and employers).

Functional Résumé

A functional résumé categorises experience under skill-based sections in order to highlight your relevant skills.

Brief example:

Organisation / Time Management

- ~ Complimented by clients and management alike for ability to meet the challenges of a busy and complex work environment.
- ~ Juggled multi-faceted tasks, simultaneously responding to client enquiries, managing an office environment and meeting statutory requirements and deadlines.

Customer Relations / Communications

- ~ Developed outstanding client relationships, through a commitment to client service and ensuring ongoing improvement in service delivery
- ~ High level skills in negotiating agreements, resulting in the communication of information relevant to the area in an effective and timely manner.

Problem Solving

- ~ Re-engineered inefficient work practices relating to timesheets and billing, resulting in new streamlined process.
- ~ Keep abreast with new knowledge to increase efficiencies, along with making decisions that reflected a balance between resource requirements and customer needs.

The advantage of a functional résumé is that all the disadvantages of the chronological résumé are removed. It disguises unstable careers, job hopping, employment gaps and over and under qualified candidates (hence its unpopularity with recruiters and employers).

This is an obvious disadvantage. Employers and panel members trying to use your résumé as a chronological guide to your work history when reading through your responses to selection criteria, find it almost impossible to do so.

My recommendation is to **only use this format if you are a chronic job hopper.**

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Combination Résumé

A combination résumé, as its name suggests, is a combination of the chronological and functional résumé. Usually the opening page is in the functional format, followed by your chronological work history.

The obvious advantage of this formatting is that it highlights your core skills in the opening page, followed by the chronological work history that agencies, recruitment consultants and HR personnel favour.

When choosing a format, bear in mind that many agencies and organisations specifically request certain information that must be included in a résumé. This usually requires candidates to submit a chronological work history. If you fall into the chronic job hopper, or return to work mum category, then the combination resume format is the perfect solution for you.

Tip 5 - Develop a stunning profile

Instead of inserting a career objective, use this space to incorporate a stunning profile, or qualifications summary. Within the profile, highlight how you meet the needs of your employer. Information you should consider including are:

- ~ Your core competencies relating to the position
- ~ Number of years experience in the sector
- ~ Highlights of your achievements and accomplishments
- ~ Management style
- ~ Affiliations to professional organisations
- ~ Relevant language skills

Note the emphasis is on competencies that are relevant to the position. This is really important, as the most effective profiles, are those that provide a summary of all the skills and attributes you possess that the employer is looking for in a candidate.

Tip 6 – Avoid long lists of soft skills

When I talk about soft skills, I am talking about your **personal skills**, such as communication and interpersonal skills, team work, attention to detail, analytical skills and so on.

While these are attributes that employers are looking for, they get so overused by job seekers, that they don't actually mean anything and there is nothing else in the document to back up a candidate's claim to their various soft skills.

The reality is, if you asked 10 people what their most valuable personal skills were, I bet you would find that "9 out of 10" would state that they have good communication and interpersonal skills and they are reliable and honest. (Does this sound like YOU?). So when it comes to a recruiting agent, human resource officer, or selection panel member viewing such a claim in your document, and **this claim is made by pretty much everyone else submitting an application** those long lists of soft skills don't actually mean much and are not taken at face value, even if they are true.

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That is not to say soft skills are not important – they are. What I am saying is, if you use them in your résumé make sure you back up your claim by providing evidence of the relevant soft skill.

Tip 7 - Focus on achievements, not long lists of duties and responsibilities

One of the biggest mistakes candidates make is providing long lists of duties and responsibilities, without providing any tangible evidence of achievements.

Achievements / accomplishments should always be included and should be the major factor highlighted in your résumé.

While a brief list of your responsibilities should be included, don't include everything; otherwise you risk having your résumé sound like a boring list of duties, without providing any tangible evidence of the VALUE you can provide to an employer.

Finally if you have had several positions that involve exactly the same duties, don't reiterate the same duties. Instead, distinguish each position, by emphasising different elements and focus on the contributions you made to each and every employer.

BONUS TIP - Forget the advice on very short résumés

If you undertake a search on how to prepare a résumé, so often you end on career sites that make a strong suggestion as to the length of your résumé. **Please IGNORE those sites that advise you to limit your résumé to 1 or 2 pages**, as usually these are American sites where the recruiting practices are different from Australia.

Instead, focus on a résumé that truly reflects your skills and experience and even if this takes 4 pages, so be it (unless a page limit is imposed by the organisation or agency). HOWEVER, make sure you don't waffle, and don't include information that is not required, repetitive, or irrelevant.

Note: The average length of résumés I professionally prepare for clients is usually anything between 3 and 4 pages. This length is more than adequate, even at the very senior level. So if your current résumé runs into 6 or more pages, (not including your cover page, if you have one) it is time to refine your current document.

Ways to prune:

- ~ Make sure you address the needs of your audience, by asking yourself if your information is relevant to the position, and if it is something the potential employer would be interested in. For example, a long list of hobbies is probably irrelevant, unless they relate to the position.
- ~ It is not necessary to include all your work history, going back to the "year dot". Not only will this age you unnecessarily, but much of your older work history, will not add value, or is merely repeating the same information. Remember your résumé isn't your biography and employers are more interested in your more recent work history, so including information from the 70's and early 80's is probably not going to be considered relevant.

Happy résumé writing!

Carolyn