

The Career Artisan
SERIES

THE
21ST CENTURY
RESUME

& Links To Custom Templates

Guide For The Perplexed

Dedicated to Your Job Search Success

Also by Mary Elizabeth Bradford

The Career Artisan Series—Tap The Hidden Job Market Guide for the Perplexed

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The Career Artisan Series—The 21st Century Resume—Guide for the Perplexed.

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Praise for The 21st Century Resume

The custom resume templates are an unbelievable bonus to this powerful how-to e-book.

“This isn’t your typical DIY resume e-book. Mary Elizabeth Bradford peels back the onion and shows you how to best market yourself in today’s tight job market. You’ll discover how to think about yourself in terms of your value to a company—which does wonders for your self confidence. Plus, she’ll show you how to effectively communicate it so employers want to hire you. The custom resume templates are an unbelievable bonus to this powerful how-to e-book.”

Jill Konrath, Best-Selling Author, Get Back to Work Faster, Selling to Big Companies, and SNAP Selling

Easily the best bargain available on Amazon for resume how-to e-books!

"No matter if you are entry level or a seasoned pro—if you are writing your own resume, this book is a MUST. Mary Elizabeth Bradford makes the process as easy as possible and she gives you online access to custom resume templates she designed herself. At this price point—this e-book is a GIFT and easily the best bargain available on Amazon for resume how-to e-books. I am a fan of her whole series." ***Robert Shindell, MA, MCDP, President & COO,***

ILostMyJob.com, LLC

It doesn't get much better than this!

"Job seekers don't want to become expert resume writers. And this book doesn't try to turn you into one. It is simply a step-by-step course covering HOW to market yourself with downloadable resume templates for you to use." ***Jason Alba, CEO of JibberJobber.com and author of I'm in a Job Search—Now What?***

Contains the most up-to-date information for creating a winning resume.

"The job search has changed in recent years and this book shows you how to craft a resume that will be read and sure to obtain an interview. It contains the most up-to-date information for creating a winning resume. She gives plenty of examples illustrating her points, making it easy to understand. A must-read for any job searcher looking to shorten their search. It is a great addition to her Career Artisan Series. Looking forward to more in the series." ***Arleen Bradley, CMCC, CJSS, Career Coach, arleenbradley.com***

You can spend hours reading articles on the Internet or spend hundreds of dollars on a resume, or you can read Mary Elizabeth's book, “The 21st Century Resume” and do it yourself.

"Even if you have a good resume book that was written a few years ago, you should invest in this book. It is comprehensive and up to date, and tells you not just WHAT to do, but HOW.

Eugenia Kaneshige, Managing Partner, Norwood Career Advisors

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INTRODUCTION

This won't be like any other resume book you might have read or that may be on the market today.

And, as a warning, in case you were hoping for a lesson in grammatical correctness—this isn't an in-depth technical or grammatical guide to writing your resume—although I will give you a few useful tips you absolutely must know if you are writing your resume yourself.

Rather, this is a step by step guide on how to market yourself via your resume.

When it comes right down to it—what is, after all, the most important question you can answer in your resume?

It's: “What good are you? Why should I be reading this?”

I know it sounds harsh, but that is indeed the question we all have to answer—whether we own our own business or are looking to be hired by a company.

We must answer the question “What can you do for me? Can you make my company money or control costs?” In my case it would be “Can you help me get hired?”

This e-book has been constructed to help you objectively design your resume for maximum results. It's also designed to help you see yourself as a true commodity—to focus on the results you deliver. This perspective is one that is shared by CEOs and leaders who are hired to think this way. If you are not in a C-level position, you are probably more conditioned to focus on tasks and responsibilities. This is what makes it particularly difficult when it comes to writing your own resume—your focus on what you do. *I will show you how to communicate what happens when you do it.*

Perhaps the best part about this e-book will be the knowledge you will come away with that can enhance the remainder of your career. Once you have the knowledge, there are simple steps you can use to keep track of your accomplishments so that, when you look at your own resume after updating it, you will think, “*Is this really me?*”

Finally, I will also provide you with custom templates that you can use once you are empowered with the knowledge of how to best market yourself to potential employers. To alleviate the problem of trying to reproduce a customized and advanced layout, I have created a separate link with a username and password that contains three custom resume templates for you to download, keep, and use.

As an Internationally Advanced Certified Resume Writer since 2004 (Career Directors International) and an Internationally Certified Master Career Director (also through

Career Directors International), past executive recruiter, and high-level job search coach with a combined 16 years experience in the career services industry, I am humbled and excited to present you with what I hope will be very important information to help you improve your resume and improve your job search results. For more information on hidden job market techniques, please see my other books in the Career Artisan Series—Guide for the Perplexed.

THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT SECRET TO CRAFTING A GREAT RESUME

What is the 21st Century Resume?

The most prevalent aspect of what I consider a resume of modern times lies in both the focus and the length. In this age of information, less is more. Every word counts in a resume, and too many words (including any and all “fluff” or “filler”) will water down your message. Your message should be focused, direct, simple, and clear.

After intense study and mentoring by a few select world-class marketers and top-level career coaches, the style I have adopted in the last several years is a radical change from years prior. My resumes have become more visually impactful, much less dense in text, and written more simply—which results in a more powerful document. Only quantifiable results and those points most relevant to landing the job you want should get real estate on your resume.

I believe that this particular style is intuitive in nature and follows common sense. Most importantly, the results on both the reader (the potential employer) and the author (the jobseeker) are extremely positive.

The more targeted your resume, the stronger it will be.

One unfortunate trend I see with my clients when they first come to me is that they have typically been in a job search for a while. Usually these jobseekers have tried using job boards coupled with a little bit of personal “networking” with little or no positive results. They have, in effect, marketed themselves using methods that are completely ineffective. But often their first reaction is not to alter their marketing methods but to generalize their resume in hopes of reaching a wider audience.

It seems counter intuitive, but the solution is to focus one’s resume on a very specific market and a very specific position; this most always results in a short job search.

The next step would involve learning more effective marketing strategies (which I have written about in another book in this same series titled *The Career Artisan Series—Tap the Hidden Job Market: Guide for the Perplexed*).

So, step one is understanding that, to have a great resume, you must first have a crystal-clear focus of what you are targeting.

Whole books are written on how to get focused on what you want to do, and there is an abundance of excellent information on this subject. But let’s take a look at a few basic points and questions that will help you quickly get a picture of your career desires. You will want to answer a few questions and get them down on paper to quickly and easily get focused.

Also, please don’t be tempted to think that you shouldn’t go after the low-hanging fruit in your job search. Time after time I have seen that job seekers who identify and pursue the exact positions in the exact industry they really want will usually get there faster and easier than those job seekers that take the attitude of either “I’ll know what I want when I see it,” or “I will

generalize my resume in effect, to demonstrate my abilities to take a wide variety of positions in multiple industries.” I think this is due, in part, to the increased enthusiasm and energy that naturally arises when jobseekers are true to their career desires.

Finally, don’t worry if you initially think that you “don’t know what you want.” Often we choke down our true desires, as money or the anxiety of hoping to land a job (any job) overrides a true and clear focus of direction. We may be too quick to think we must take anything that is offered to us because the economy is bad or believing that others have more experience than we do, are younger than we are, or a variety of other assumptions that often come up after submitting for multiple jobs on job boards with very limited results.

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR FOCUS OF DIRECTION—THE FOUNDATION OF A POWERFUL RESUME



Every successful project first begins with a well-thought-out plan. Your success largely depends on the components of your plan.

For example, depending on your personality, you may subscribe to the method of “I will know my dream job when I see it.” Personally, with my creative personality, I empathize with this method (which is not really a method as much as it is just intuition). However, this is a poor choice for planning a career move.

Here are the things you must know **BEFORE** you begin writing your resume and, for that matter, your entire job search, if you want to ensure any kind of purposeful direction and control over its outcome:

- Your career goals.
- Your driving motivators.
- Your dream job.
- Your target markets.
- Your titles/positions of choice.
- Other important career parameters.
- Your brand.



Your Career Goals

This is a statement about where you want to go and the goals you want to reach in the next 3 to 5 years.

It's really, really important that you give yourself some time to focus on your answer and write it down.

It's amazing how oftentimes when we put career hopes and dreams on the back burner (i.e., in the back of our minds), we simply cannot have anything more than a foggy idea that is unfocused, not ready, not purposeful, and not exciting.

The simple ACT of committing to focus on what YOU want and writing it out is a powerful step forward on conscious and subconscious levels. Simple, but powerful. It's also the precursor to a highly targeted, powerful, and effective resume.

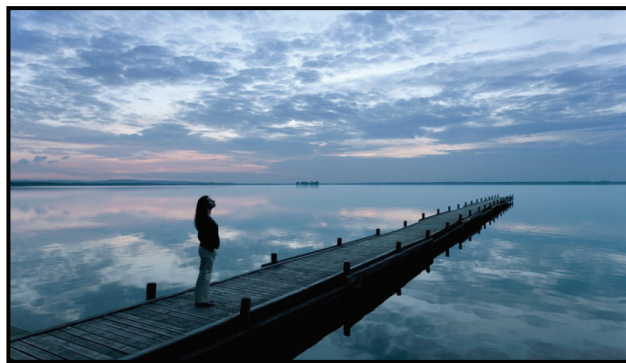
Your Driving Motivators

What are the bottom-line needs you have to meet to make your next career move? A different position, a new industry, more money, a new location, or more work-life balance? List your top three.

Your Dream Job

Picture a blank canvas on which you can draw any picture you like. Crystallize your vision of your dream job by closing your eyes and think now about what your dream job means to you.

- What does it look like?
- Where are you working? At home looking out the window? In your garden? Or looking out at the skyline from your downtown office on the ninth floor?
- Is the environment cutting edge and fast paced or highly technical? Or is it refined, traditional, or academic?
- What kind of people are you working with?
- What are you doing? Working independently or with a team?
- Are you brainstorming or planning or are you more hands-on, managing projects?
- Are you working with your hands, building or doing something tactical and “in the present”—or are you paving roads into the future, thinking of the bigger picture and creating plans? Are you implementing those plans or directing a team to do it for you?
- How much money are you making? Are you traveling? If so, how often?
- Where are you? In your current location or have you relocated? Are you in the city or a smaller, more rural area? Are you working internationally?



Yes, I know . . . it's purposely hard. The first thing that pops into your head is often best. My answer was I am a lamplighter. Why? Because I love the artful, romantic image (hence "The Career Artisan") and because I light the way for my clients time and again.

❖ ***What are you an expert in?***

When you are at your best professionally, how do you affect other people? Do they get excited, find solutions to problems, band together as a team, become empowered or enlightened with the information you share with them?

❖ ***What do you stand for in your business?***

It could be getting the details right, communicating clearly, or helping others. For example, in my business I stand for "truth in advocacy." My passion is getting people the right information that is truly going to help them no matter what.

❖ ***What is your brand identity?***

If you described what you have to offer a company in one sentence, what would it be?

Here's a tip you can use to understand how others see your brand identity:

Ask your spouse, partner, good friend, or coworker to describe you in three words. They can only use three words. Take note of the feedback you get—you may be amazed and you can certainly use this information to formulate your brand sentence.

My one sentence statement is in the tagline for my business—"Masterpiece marketing strategies to help you focus on, find, and win your dream job!"

By identifying your brand, you are more able to communicate your value clearly and authentically. Like a thread, you should consistently weave your brand throughout your resume and cover letters and into your interviews.

Follow the simple blueprint on the following page to get crystal clear on your focus of direction.

YOUR FOCUS OF DIRECTION BLUEPRINT

My career goal is:

** Tip: you do not need to know HOW you are going to accomplish your goal! If you focus on the HOW, you may get stuck. Focus on what you want to accomplish—the HOW will work itself out and I will show you how—I promise!*

My driving motivators are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My dream job is:

My target markets are:

My titles/positions of choice are:

Branding

Professionally, I am:

I am an expert in:

When I am at my best, I affect others in the following ways:

What I stand for, no matter what:

My brand identity is:

Notes:

13 SECRETS CERTIFIED RESUME WRITERS USE TO MAKE YOUR RESUME STAND OUT

1. Laser focus your resume.

You can use the blueprint and tips in the previous chapter to get focused and clear on the direction of your next career move. Here is another trick that is extremely effective; I use this when I design resumes for clients:

“The Mirroring Technique—using www.indeed.com.”

One of the major reasons resume writers—or any writer for that matter—are in business is because it’s simply so hard to be objective in writing about ourselves or our businesses.

For this very reason, if you are writing your own resume, it may be tricky for you to try and customize your resume for the position you are going after. To make the process “more automatic,” here are three tips that you can use to “tweak” your resume properly—I call this “The Mirroring Technique.”

Tip #1: Get a Focus. This is an obvious one but there is a trick to it. So often, professionals only think their resume is “focused” when, in reality, they are generalizing. I believe this is because many professionals believe (incorrectly) that they should not focus their job search goals too narrowly for fear of losing out on possible open positions. You can exacerbate this misguided belief by limiting your job search to job boards for executive jobs and positions. Job boards only represent about 1 percent of actual jobs that are available and are awash with competition.

The first thing I do when working with my clients is have them complete my Career Success Blueprint™. This gets them hyper-focused on exactly what they want—really understanding where the low-hanging fruit is for them. This information, now on paper, also gets them out of “job board” headspace and helps direct their energies to thoughts of “what exactly is it that I really want and what are some of my primary job search motivators—such as money, geographic, and industry parameters?” When they get crystal clear on these important components, then and only then can they take the next step—which is to write their resume and formulate the right job search plan. The same is true for you.

Tip #2: Shift Your Perspective. You must approach the information contained in your resume through the eyes of potential employers. In other words, you are going to want to write some things about your career history that will probably not be applicable to your ideal position. Shift your perspective; look at things from your potential employer’s point of view—taking into consideration the position requirements that you know of and, most importantly, the results you can bring to the table . . . your quantifiable achievements.

For example, if you have a background of experience in operations AND marketing—and you are focusing on a marketing director position, you will most likely want to minimize your operations experience and draw forth only the experience relevant to your goals.

Tip #3: Using “The Mirroring Technique.” This is an extension of shifting your perspective. Take an example of your ideal job off any relevant job description using a job aggregator like indeed.com. Next, highlight ALL the keywords and phrases used in the job description to communicate the ideal candidate that also match your skills and strengths. Now weave those keywords into the first page of your resume . . . essentially “mirroring” what they are asking for.

So often we say to ourselves mentally, “Oh, this position fits me perfectly!” and yet we fail to take that next step—which is actually rather simple—and make sure we are communicating this in our resume. Now, using this technique—making sure that you are mirroring what a company is looking for—becomes quite easy!

Let me elaborate on the technique of using a sample position from indeed.com—and how powerful this little exercise truly is. Let’s say, for instance, that you are interested in a VP of Sales position for a mid-size technology company. You can go to indeed.com, use those search keywords, and in about 10 or 15 minutes you will have found three or four position descriptions that sound like a great match for you. It doesn’t matter where these positions are located or even what companies they are with. You are looking for descriptions that excite and energize you—you will know you have found a great match by the emotions they evoke in you. You want to cut and paste each of these descriptions into a Word document and highlight all the keywords and phrases that match you. Most likely you will begin to see a pattern of keywords in each position. You simply take and use these keywords in your resume. You can use them in your showcase keywords at the top of your resume, in your opening statement, and in your bulleted list of core competencies.

Bonus Tip: I like to use a lot of keywords at the very beginning of my resumes so that the reader can (at a glance) get a pretty good idea of what my client is all about in just a few seconds. By using very clear communication at the very top of your resume—which also can be called “good branding”—not only will your resume clearly and powerfully communicate your career objectives and expertise, but you can subtly tweak your keywords to “mirror” a particular industry or position. For example, let’s say you have both start-up and turnaround experience. “Technology Start-Ups” might be one of your keyword phrases at the top of your resume. If you are reaching out to a mid-size technology firm that you know needs a turnaround expert, you can switch out your keyword phrases, replacing “Technology Start-Ups” with “Turnaround Expert.”

Using these simple techniques should increase your interviews and interest from potential employers.

I always approach any tips I provide you from the perspective of going direct to employers versus waiting for the perfect job you found on a job board. Remember, more than 85 percent of available jobs are not publically advertised—so no matter what your industry is or what stage you are at in your career, it makes total sense for you to get your information to the key decision-makers, companies, and industries that YOU are most interested in. You might be surprised at their show of interest in YOU and your initiative!

If you are ready to learn more about how easy it is to tap into the hidden job market, you can check out my award-winning home study program at www.job-searchsystem.com.

2. Leave out information that does not apply to your next job.

Most people will be tempted to include everything they feel or believe they know how to do in their resume—with the supporting belief that the more they can demonstrate their wide breadth of capabilities, the more valuable they will look to potential employers. This belief usually goes along with the idea (consciously or subconsciously) that the job seeker does not truly feel in control over their job search but rather desires that someone will see their resume and figure out where to place them. In most all cases, businesses cannot market their product or services this way and a job seeker can't expect to successfully market themselves this way—expecting someone else to figure out where they should belong in a company.

What does work in today's market is to get laser focused on what YOU want and then write your resume *to* that industry and position. You maximize the skills needed for that industry and position and minimize or omit any other information so as not to detract from the critical information on your resume. When in doubt—leave it out.

Remember, your resume isn't a legal document, it's a marketing piece. I am not suggesting you lie. But you can talk more at length about any and all important points in the actual interview.

For example, you may choose to leave out the months of your employment and just state the years. Reasons for doing this include not drawing attention to an employment gap or even something as simple as streamlining your resume so it's as visually clean as possible. I have done this for clients in the past who had a “busy” resume for one reason or another and I found it useful to go back and take out every digit, word, or dash that didn't absolutely need to be there—just to edit it down to the most easily readable document possible. It's not lying to state “2008-2010” versus “May 2008 to December 2010.” If your potential employer wishes for you to elaborate on your dates of employment, you can accommodate them during the job interview.

Other things you may choose to leave out are positions you held 20 years ago, religious affiliations, elaborate descriptions of military experience, non applicable hard or soft skills relative to your career direction, second and third email addresses and phone numbers, and information pertaining to your skills in a different industry—just to name a few.

3. A good visual resume design.

Ideally when a potential employer looks at your resume you want their eye to bounce down from top to bottom—being drawn from one area to the next. This keeps them reading. I fondly refer to a good resume design as “eye candy”—at the end of a potential employer's first passing glance through your resume, you want them to feel satisfied. What will satisfy them? Well first they will want to know what kind of position you are going after and in what industry. They will probably want to know if your experience is with large (Fortune 100 companies), small (start-up) companies, or something in between. They will want to know

how many people and/or how much revenue you have managed, what a few of your outstanding accomplishments are, and a little bit about the companies you worked for (if they have never heard of them before). I am going to show you how to easily craft all of this and yes, it is possible to glean this much information about you in just a few seconds IF you know how to put your resume together correctly.

However, MOST resumes I see that get sent to me do not satisfy. Rather, the eye goes from top to bottom, looking for said information to hopefully get some sort of a bead on the candidate (you). What most often happens is the eye searches down the page to figure this out—but the information is not constructed in such a way as to reveal these basic points.

So, what happens then? In a split second, you have frustrated your reader and made a bad first impression. It happens in a matter of seconds and it happens all the time.

Your job is to make it EASY FOR THE READER to understand who you are and what you can do for them. I am going to go through exactly how to do this and, even better, I am providing you with a link to three custom resume templates I have created for you to use. These are really beautiful, up-to-date templates that will make it easy for you to follow along and just plug in your information. This link is password-protected and you can find it here:

<http://www.maryelizabethbradford.com/21stcenturyresume.php>

Username: 21cr

Password: VIP (case sensitive)

You will find these templates incorporate plenty of “eye candy,” including lots of white space, tables, borders, shadowing, nice checkmarks, and different colors—among other things.

4. Bold words you want the eye to go to first.

A couple of simple examples are:

The keywords at the top of your resume.

Your position/title vs. the company, location, and date of employment.

Your degree (spell it out like this: Bachelor of Science) vs. the name of the academic institution.

5. Put the most important things at the top of the first page of your resume.

This sounds overly simplistic but I see critical information buried at the bottom of resumes all the time. Critical pieces of information include:

- Your name and contact information.
- Your industry of choice.
- Your title/position of choice.
- Any critical, secondary information related to the position you are pursuing.
- Company size you are targeting or reflective of your background of experience if it matches your career goals.
- A few results you bring to the table, preferably quantified (\$\$\$ or %%).

On the following pages you will find a couple of visual examples.



Example A

TIM P. LEARA

■ CORPORATE FINANCE MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVE ■

1212 Whitman Court
Rolling Hills, TX 342226

Phone: 830.221.4567
E-mail: tleara@gmail.com

CFO ❖ MANUFACTURING ❖ FINANCIAL TURNAROUNDS

Fortune 500 Corporations ⇨ Financial Restructurings ⇨ Operational Improvements ⇨ Revenue Stream Generation ⇨ Cost Containment Programs ⇨ Global Sourcing

An accomplished corporate finance executive with outstanding leadership credentials and verifiable success building, leading and improving the financial performance of mid- to large-size manufacturing organizations. Reputation for establishing key operational metrics that significantly improve EBITDA, increase shareholder value, and optimize P&L performance in variable market climates.

ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- ~ **Realized 350% EBITDA improvement in 24 months through improving operational metrics.** ~
- ~ **Lowered breakeven units by 28% and increased contribution margin 20% in 24 months.** ~
- ~ **Led successful financial turnaround, reduced overhead expense \$2 million, average inventory \$2.1 million, improved liquidity \$2 million and reduced inventory cost \$1 million annually.** ~

Example B

DAVID DEVILLA

777 One Street, City, State, Zip ■ TEL: 888-8888-888 ■ EMAIL: MGDEVILLA@GMAIL.COM

VICE PRESIDENT OPERATIONS–MANUFACTURING–GRAPHICS COMMUNICATIONS

PLANT & PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT ⇒ CONTINUOUS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT ⇒ KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES ⇒ PROVEN ROI RESULTS ⇒ TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Proven manufacturing operations executive with verifiable success leading mid-size manufacturing operations, increasing revenue streams, capturing multi-million-dollar savings through exemplary plant management, and initiating process improvements that reduce operating expenses.

SPAN OF EXPERTISE

**-15 Years in
Manufacturing
Management &
Leadership Roles**

**-Effective Continuous
Improvement & Best
Practices Process
Expert**

**-Equipment
Modernization & New
Technologies**

-P&L to \$33 Million

- **Exceptional ability to drive financial and operational objectives:** led 15% to 20% revenue increases in one manufacturing facility for seven consecutive years in a declining market.
 - **Consistently deliver quality excellence:** reduced and maintained spoilage rates under .75 as a percentage of revenue, and achieved on-time delivery percentages between 98% and 100% for eight consecutive years.
 - **Leading equipment and technology upgrades that lower opex:** increased throughput 51% in less than three months through improving workflow software. Reduced labor costs 33% annually via equipment upgrades.
-

6. Understand the difference between a chronological, functional, and hybrid resume design and which you should use.

Here is what you need to know in a nutshell:

Chronological resumes focus on the chronology of your professional work history. Resumes that are appropriate to be written in this format are, in my opinion, limited to academic resumes. Chronological resumes don't automatically demonstrate the critical points I have outlined above—and so they are not entirely effective in marketing you and your skills. Even if it is appropriate that you have a resume in this format, I still prefer what I call a “hybrid” version. More on that below.

Functional resumes: a true functional resume focuses on your skills and strengths that can be transferred to a new position and/or industry. Typically these are one-page resumes that strongly market your skills while minimizing your work history. In some cases, only the company name and location are mentioned. From time to time I will write a resume of this nature when my client is making a radical career shift, is going back to work after a several-year hiatus, or some other extreme circumstance. The purpose of such resumes is to keep the focus on the value of the individual while minimizing the chance of being passed over due to a perceived “red flag.” When you land the interview, of course, you will have to sell/explain/elaborate in order to keep the interest of the potential employer.

A hybrid resume: 95% of the resumes I write and primarily what I recommend is what I call a hybrid resume—a blend of marketing function/skills/results in a targeted way while also listing a full chronological narrative.

7. Call out your accomplishments—great for C-level and sales and marketing executives—but anyone can do it.

The entire next section is dedicated to how to easily create and quantify your accomplishments. Most job seekers write and write about what they DO—while, perhaps without realizing it, not communicating what happens when they do it. Well, it's the end result and ONLY the end result that potential employers are interested in. You must begin there and follow your results with a short explanation of how you got that result. Again, most everyone will write this the other way around, so if you can grasp this fairly easy concept, you will stand a good chance of blowing your competition out of the water.

Here is a quick example:

- *Created a customer service call center improvement plan that improved team morale and increased customer satisfaction by 31%.*

Instead, say this, which garners interest. Elaborate further in your actual interview:

- *Drove customer satisfaction 31% in 6 months by improving call center processes.*

The latter grabs the reader faster, is more simply and clearly written and is stated with more clarity and confidence. Most importantly, the sentence begins with a quantifiable result—this also indicates that the jobseeker “gets” that the result is the most important aspect to the reader.

8. “Frame” your professional experience section—aka professional “narrative.”

When you list your career history or professional narrative, you are telling a story and a story must be framed. Here are the points you will need to follow to easily frame your story:

- Include and bold your title(s).
- In most cases, include your titles first. If there was more than one title in a company, list them all one under the other, starting with the most recent title first. Put the dates in parentheses next to each title and do not bold. It’s not necessary for the eye to go to each respective date.
- After you list the company name, include a short, positive statement about the company including the \$\$, size, location, basic information on what they do and anything positive you can say—for example: premier, world-class, award-winning, fastest-growing, named one of the fastest-growing _____ by Forbes, etc. Giving the company bragging rights demonstrates high integrity and is positively noted by the potential employer. Here is an example:

Headquartered in Houston, Texas, IBR is a \$10 billion award-winning global engineering, construction, and services company supporting the energy, petrochemicals, government services, and civil infrastructure sectors. They employ over 50,000 people worldwide.

- Next you want to create a short statement about what you did for that company. Start at the beginning. Were you hired for a specific purpose? Then you were hired or appointed to do xxx. Were you recruited or promoted? Then that’s how you begin your statement.
- Next share a sentence or two that continues to frame your story. Be sure to share things like how much P&L you oversaw, how many people you managed, or how big the territory you sell to is. Anything to give you reader a picture of the basic size and scope of your role.
- Now it’s time to close your statement (which is ideally only a few sentences long) with the challenges you faced. Were you challenged with turning around a poorly performing department, improving revenue, or rolling out 3 new products in a short time frame? Here is your chance to set up your storyline. Here is an example:

Recruited to lead, manage, and mentor an account team of 20, closing large and complex 7-figure deals in the xxx market. Challenges included driving revenue of

\$28 million in a diverse geographic region of multiple cultures in a depressed economy.

- Finally, your bullet points describing several of your accomplishments should be listed after you set up your story using the steps in the above bullet points. Remember to begin with the end result of your accomplishment. You have effectively set up and completed your storyline. You have shared a bit about the company you worked for, why you were hired, what the challenges were and, finally, what you “accomplished” in overcoming those challenges.

9. Break up the text so it’s easy to read.

For this tip, simply use my custom resume templates to ensure you are utilizing sufficient white space.

Also, go back through your draft resume once you have written it and edit, edit, edit! The simpler your resume is, the easier it will be to read and the more impactful your accomplishments will be.

10. Front load, frame, simplify, and bold your accomplishments.

More on this below.

11. Title your page twos.

Include your name, the page number, and preferably your phone number on the second page of your resume in case the first and second pages are separated.

12. Don’t put websites.

Don’t include a lot of websites and LinkedIn profiles (as a general rule) since it’s seen as somewhat presumptuous that your reader is going to enthusiastically jump on the Internet and start performing deep-level research following each of your links. Your resume is scanned initially for 5 to 10 seconds. You need to use that fact as your foundation when you create your content.

13. Don’t list information on positions you held more than 15-20 years ago.

There are exceptions to this rule but, generally speaking, the positions you held 15 or 20 years ago aren’t going to be applicable to the position you are presently in or want now. You don’t want secondary information to detract from the really important points of your resume and your most recent positions. So we go back to “less is more.” You can always elaborate in your actual interviews.

CHECKLIST: WHAT TO INCLUDE AND WHAT TO LEAVE OUT OF YOUR RESUME

What to include:

- Your basic contact information.
- ONE phone number.
- ONE email address.
- Your city and state.
- Your focus—title/industry/company size or theme (i.e.: turnarounds/startups/emerging technologies).
- Your core competencies in a bulleted list no more than 5 bullets deep.
- All information about you that is relevant to the position you are pursuing.
- Your academic and related training information.
- Your professional history.
- Your quantifiable achievements.
- Basic information, written in a positive tone, about the companies you have worked for previously.

What to leave out:

- Multiple website and social networking links.
- Your physical address.
- All information not relevant to the position you are pursuing.
- Big blocks of text describing “what” you do.
- Word salad sentences and three-dollar words.
- Overuse of technical jargon.
- Fancy fonts. Use Times New Roman 11 or 12 point (many executives have glasses and like to read larger, more traditional font). You can also use Arial 10 or 11 point, which is considered more technical.

SECRETS TO CREATING AMAZING QUANTIFIABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Most people struggle with how to create career accomplishments. A lot of people think they don't really have them. It's not unusual for me to hear from clients, "I can't quantify my accomplishments," or "My job doesn't work that way," or "I'm not in sales." However, I would say 99% of people that I work with do indeed quantifiable accomplishments.

I think the reason people struggle with quantifying their accomplishments is because when we think of accomplishments, we're usually operating in a mode of "what we do" . . . our menu of things that we do throughout our day, if you will. Creating accomplishments requires a slight shift in focus from what we do to what happens when we do it. This is what employers need to see on your resume.

This shift in focus is vital, not just for creating your accomplishments, but in how you think about yourself in terms of understanding the value that you truly bring to a potential employer. This is going to help in all areas, in your cover letters, in your resume, and in the way you present yourself in job interviews.

Career accomplishments are the meat of the story in your resume. They should be easy to read and impactful. But before you can begin creating them—it's critical to understand the following point. I have written and read thousands of resumes, and what I have gleaned about career accomplishments is that it seems to me our perceptions of our own accomplishments are mostly often misunderstood and underappreciated. We often just think "Oh, it's just what I do." That's a common kind of internal dialogue. And again, when I've asked my clients to write down their various career achievements I hear, "I don't think of myself in that way; I can't recall accomplishments like that."

So first you must look at the possibility that you might be devaluing the unique and valuable skills and strengths that you bring to the table. Prepare to own your accomplishments and to accept a stronger and more marketable branding statement of who you are and the value you bring to an employer.

As a resume writer I will sometimes give a first draft to a client and they act shocked or embarrassed by their own accomplishments. They might say "I can't claim this," or "I think that this is overstating what I did."

My typical response sounds like: "Okay, but weren't you a key contributor to the success of this \$10 million project?" or "Aren't my numbers or facts correct?" or "Did you not win this award for the job you did on such and such project?" Their answer is invariably "No, that's all correct, there are no errors."

They were simply shocked to see themselves and their value to a company on paper in a positive way. They had never thought about themselves like that before.

There is an amazing transformation that can take place when you see yourself in a different light—a true and objective light and to finish out the above story—usually after a couple of days of reviewing the information and the content of the new resume, the clients will come back and tell me, “Ah yes, okay, I get it now,” and then all of a sudden *they step up to match where I’ve put them—which is where they really were in the first place!*

It’s very common to devalue oneself in this way and, once corrected, it often bridges the gap between where you are now and where you want to be. You may have your sights on a dream job that you are very well qualified for but somehow between the way you are thinking about yourself and the qualifications for that job, you can’t truly see yourself in that position even though you desire it and think you are qualified for it.

Thus, gaining a true perspective of your accomplishments acts not only as a psychological motivator but a healing agent. The first step is to own your accomplishments so you can confidently start stepping into greater roles, bigger positions, and a bigger salary.

The First Steps to Creating Career Accomplishments

Using indeed.com.

Use a job aggregator like indeed.com to find 1 to 4 ideal career positions and print them out. Next, highlight the responsibilities and match all the keywords and phrases that resonate with you and that you have in your toolbox of skills and strengths.

When you are done, you will have certain keywords and phrases highlighted and, if you read down your list, you will start to see duplicates, or a pattern, if you will. Let’s say you have highlighted complex problem solver multiple times because it is in multiple positions you have picked out that are representative of ideal positions for you. If you see yourself as a complex problem solver—then you simply ask yourself, “Why am I connecting my skill set to that keyword?” Or, “What have I done in my past positions to make me feel that I am a good solver of complex problems?”

Inevitably your mind will connect to a memory of complex problems that you have solved. Using this information, you can now start to craft your success stories. Also using this simple exercise can ensure that your accomplishments match up with the job that you’re going after.

Keyword your strengths.

You can use ideal jobs, or you can also do this other exercise that is also really helpful. Start with a blank sheet of paper and just start to brainstorm on all the things you love to do the most and have fun with it. So think about what you’re doing when you are loving your job, and that’s usually the easiest way to get all the true authentic information bubbling up to the surface.

If you feel stuck, by the way, when you do brainstorming like this, take a break for the day because it give your subconscious mind a chance to really work on these ideas. We often don’t give ourselves permission to think this way or think about these things, so don’t feel frustrated if

nothing is coming to you right away. Sometimes it takes time because of how we've conditioned ourselves not to think in this way.

Turn your strengths into stories.

Now you want to look at your list and ask yourself, "Why do I feel this way?" Perhaps you wrote "motivating" as one of your strengths, or "realizing cost savings." Ask yourself, "Why do I feel like I'm good at controlling costs or why do I feel that I'm motivating?" This will help trigger your memory to the actual events that you're connecting with that determined strength.

Taking this a step further, perhaps with motivating maybe you connect this strength to a time that you motivated your boss to let you take on a project that generated a certain amount of revenue for the company. Or maybe you motivated a national sales team with incentives that increased the company's client base. So this is a very simple way to authentically draw out the key strengths that you want to use in your next position.

Writing your strengths as accomplishments—a simple template.

Now you want to write a simple template for each story. The template goes like this—there are only three lines:

The problem.

What you did to address the problem or challenge.

The result.

So problem, action, result. That's it.

Again the key here is really and truly not to make this complicated. Keep your answers short. In fact, when you're relaying these stories not only in your resume but in your interviews, you're going to want to keep them preferably thirty seconds, max under a minute because otherwise you'll lose your listener. So a good way to think about this is to understand how products are marketed. Less definitely increases the impact so we want to use the same principle.

Begin your accomplishment with the result first.

Start your accomplishment statement with your results. What most people will do is finish their accomplishment statement with the result. Here is an example:

"Planned and configured electrical services for two facilities that saved one client \$3 million."

What we want to do is lead with the result so that the statement has greater impact so the correct configuration would be "Realized a \$3 million savings." That's much stronger right off the bat. It keeps the reader reading. There is a natural curiosity to more fully understand how you got that result.

"Realized a \$3 million savings for one client through innovative planning and configuration of electrical services for two facilities."

Here is another example for a project manager that has a result at the beginning and the end:

“Saved one client \$1 million in fees through alternative planning and design changes. This project was awarded best private project under \$20 million by the AIA, 2010.”

Getting your facts and figures.

Now what if your accomplishment doesn't have a dollar figure in it? Or what if you don't know exactly what dollar figure or percentage is? First of all, you can give approximate figures because what you're really trying to do here is give your reader a general framework. Your resume isn't a legal document but, rather, a marketing piece that serves to demonstrate the size and scope of things you have worked on or money you have made and/or saved a company or client. If you've been working with a Fortune 50 company and you saved someone \$25 million, that's a whole lot different than writing that you saved \$400,000. So think of this exercise as “framing” your story—using exact or approximate figures—which helps the reader to understand where your impact level is.

If you really want to check your numbers or percentages, here is one way to do it. Contact someone you used to work with and say, “Hey Joe, remember that project we worked on . . . would you say that it boosted our customer satisfaction rate by at least 30% and maybe it saved us over \$600,000 in refunds that year back in 2008?” If Joe says to you, “Oh at least that,” then you know you have your number and your verification.

I also want to address what you can do if you don't have numbers . . . if you can't save \$400,000 or \$30 million? Percentages aren't as strong as dollar figures but they're the next best thing. You can even quantify without giving percentages but this is an example of a percentage accomplishment:

“Increased PMP certifications by 260% in less than 12 months in support of the service organization's knowledge management program by setting up an onsite employee preparation course.”

Here is another example:

“Reduced turnover from 112% down to 8%, capturing over \$487,000 in training costs through spearheading an analysis and restructuring of internal HR operations.”

And this:

“Increased efficiencies by 22% in two facilities through restructuring the hourly and salaried compensations systems to align with local area markets.”

This truly demonstrates how nearly everything that we do in our job trickles down to some type of quantifiable result whether we were operating independently or on a team. Speaking of being on a team—I bet you are wondering how to couch your collective accomplishment on your resume. Let's say that you were on a team that saved \$4 million. Then you can say something like this:

“Key contributor to a \$4 million reduction in operational costs via administrative process improvements.”

I have worked with countless clients who told me they had no real accomplishments—but after following the simple steps I have outlined here they were able to shift their focus and quickly manifest wonderful accomplishments they could use in their resumes.

The end game for you, the reader, is that the more stellar you look and the more deeply you communicate the results that you bring, the more quality interviews and offers you will get and the more money you can command.

Career planning: keep track of your accomplishments.

I suggest that you keep a notebook or a folder on your computer called “Career Accomplishments.”

Every time you have a “win”—you complete a project, you land a client, you drive revenue, improve processes/productivity, or control costs, simply write it in your file.

It takes a little practice and dedication to develop this habit but your career is WORTH IT! So jot these things down. From now on, when you update your resume, you will have your accomplishments readily available. This is a great investment in your career, won’t take you much time at all, and the payoff is huge.

Secrets to Creating Amazing Quantifiable Accomplishments

- Shift your thinking from WHAT you do to WHAT HAPPENS when you do it.
- Finish your story. Your story has a beginning (the problem) a middle (what you did to fix the problem) and an end (what happened when you fixed the problem—who benefited. How did they benefit?).
- Check your numbers. If you aren’t sure how much revenue you generated or to what degree you decreased operating expenses, call a colleague or boss that worked on the project with you to get confirmation on approximate figures. Remember your resume is a marketing piece, not a legal document. Do not lie, but do not panic if you are unsure of exact dollar amounts. You are trying to paint an accurate and fair picture for the reader.
- Front load your accomplishments. Don’t say: “Led an initiative to improve customer service where __, __, and __ happened and resulted in customer satisfaction surveys to improve from 67% to 97%.” Say: “Improved customer satisfaction by 30% in under 6 months by _____.”
- Keep your language simpler than you think you might need to. Help your reader by giving them a clear, simple picture of your success. Numbers speak for themselves; three-dollar words lose the reader.

- EVERYONE has quantifiable accomplishments. Sales executives, lawyers, janitors, software developers, and waitresses. But few people think in terms of results; rather, they think in terms of “tasks and skills.” Shift your thinking to finish your story. It’s the results, not the tasks, that companies are interested in. Demonstrate you understand this and you gain a leg up on your competition and a very important secret to your success.

Here are some examples:

PRESIDENT—TECHNOLOGY

- Led turnaround and sale of a photonics company at twice the Board’s expected price.
- Led 140% growth through forging a strategic partnership that generated \$14 million in transaction fees.
- Drove sales for one technology company from \$40 million to \$60 million dollars in under 12 months in a global market decline.

HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR

- Realized \$3.9 million savings through improving human resource systems.
- Reduced turnover from 112% to 18% in 24 months, saving nearly \$3 million in training costs.
- Drove operational efficiencies 42%, aligning compensation systems to performance requirements.
- Saved \$895,000 in labor costs while improving on-time delivery from 75% to 100%.

BUSINESS CONSULTANT

- Captured an estimated \$300,000 in annual interest savings through partnering with Six Sigma group to implement a process that improved invoice generation processes.
- Realized \$50,000 in annual savings while simultaneously increasing IT resources through leading the outsourcing of corporate EDI mapping/transmission activities to an EDI Service Provider.
- Captured \$150,000 in annual savings through an order-to-cash process for clients.

JANITOR

- Saved \$20,000 per year by upgrading lighting fixtures to fluorescent.
- Reduced visitor waiting time to zero by opening on time every day for three years.

- Improved response time for maintenance issues 50% by implementing an email request-for-services system.

COMMERCIAL CONTRACTOR

- Honored with The National CMAA's "Best Private Project Under \$20 Million" Award.
- Took over problematic aviation project, bringing it in on time and saving \$1.5 million.
- Perfect track record of completing projects on time and under budget for 15 years.

BUSINESS SYSTEMS ANALYST

- Realized \$50,000 in annual savings through centralizing EDI and e-business customer inquiries.
- Captured an estimated \$300,000 through spearheading an improvement initiative for invoice payment processes.

DOCUMENT CONTROL SPECIALIST

- Resolved pricing issues and automated 80% of company's orders. Worked with cross-functional teams on multiple automation and process improvements, enabling turnkey order processing for the majority of the company's orders.
- Reduced non-standard order processing time by 70%. Worked with team as a key contributor to cut average turnaround time from 24 hours to 8 hours through multiple processes and pricing improvements that greatly improved customer service on non-standard pricing orders and improved order processing time by 16 hours.
- Prevented pricing and order problems and disputes. As part of a core team of pricing experts, participated in weekly problem/resolution meetings with sales, marketing, and management teams to ensure smooth trouble-free pricing and order processing.

CHEF

- Earned recruitment into the higher position of Cook 2 at The Grill restaurant within 60 days of being hired.
- Took over entire banquet kitchen management in response to a short staff within 3 weeks of being hired. With very little instruction, managed the work of 3 absent line cooks and was commended for exceptional skills and effort.
- Saved \$130,000 annually in food expenses by leading process improvements in ordering and vendor management.

Additional Accomplishment Tips:

- After you finish creating your career accomplishments, you want to essentially “wrap” everything else in your resume around these successes. So your qualifications summary, your core competencies, everything surrounding your key accomplishments should be short snapshots of each other. In other words, everything should flow and have a nice continuity. If you are being true to yourself and emphasizing the right skills and strengths for the position that you want this should happen easily and naturally.
- For your qualifications summary, you want to focus on an overview of the results that you produce to tell who you are and what you can do for a company versus opening with a statement that leans more towards you and what you’re looking for.
- When we send correspondence to a company or we give someone our resume, it’s not about what we’re looking for; we have to think like a consultant. It’s about what the company is looking for and seeing if there’s a match there. So put on your consultant’s hat and approach your initial meetings with potential employers in this way: “What are your problems, what are your challenges, and what can I do for you?” Then the end result, of course, is going to be more meaningful and authentic and everyone is going to get what they want at a higher level.
- Another quick tip is not to generalize your resume but DO write it for everyone. Your resume has to be written to demonstrate your expertise, but multiple people in multiple departments are probably going to be viewing it. So you want it to be equally compelling to people who are directors of human resources, even if you go through key decision makers. It might ultimately end up in the hands of HR, presidents, various managers, and maybe even staff. Spell out acronyms at least once and watch the three-dollar words and technical jargon.
- Other red flags include mentioning specific companies you worked for so that the reader just attaches you to those companies instead of visualizing you working for them. And again, too much detail, technical information, too many sentences that are only decipherable to people intimately associated with what you do, or sentences that are too thick to get through that you lose your reader—are all red flags.
- Editing can be a tricky task. Sometimes it is tempting to include much more information than is really needed. When you are editing your resume, think of it like a movie trailer. You are giving your reader a taste, a preview of the coming attraction . . . which is YOU in the live interview. The purpose of your resume is to get the reader wanting more . . . wanting to know more about you.

CREATING CAREER ACCOMPLISHMENTS—A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

In summary, your career accomplishments are tantalizing highlights (stories) of your strengths and aptitudes. You want to showcase these in your resume and you want to communicate them (in less than one minute) in all of your upcoming interviews!

The secret to creating incredible career accomplishments is to make sure your stories reflect those things you truly love to do the most, and to make sure your stories are quantified (\$\$%%). Use this simple template to create at least FIVE of your favorite accomplishments.

Accomplishment Template

Problem:

What I Did:

Result:

Here are a couple of examples of working drafts:

Example #1

Problem:

My clients are frustrated with their job search.

What I did/do:

I develop marketing plans, resumes, and information products that are highly motivating, simple, and effective for them to use.

The result?

The majority of my clients land their jobs of choice in under three months with an average of \$20K increase in salary.

Example #2

Problem:

Company was not marketing successfully to the Baby Boomer population in California.

What I did:

Researched and designed a marketing program targeted to that market—developed a marketing campaign, worked with advertising company to develop the appropriate communication strategies, sponsored such and such event, etc.

The result?

Grew targeted market share by 200% in under 8 months.

. . . notice the WOW factor when you read “the result?” That’s what your potential employer feels about YOU when you simply and easily communicate WHAT happens when you do what YOU do!

Tip: Career accomplishments do NOT have to be earth-shattering, but rather reflective of what happens when you are doing what you love. You will be AMAZED at how “big” your success becomes when you write it out and communicate it. Story topics are limitless! They can include:

- How you turned around an unhappy client or your successful turnaround of a struggling company.
- How you diffused inner office politics or to how you orchestrated a political campaign.
- How you improved your own work-life balance (and your health and enthusiasm for your work!) to how you improved the work environment for a whole corporation.

WHEN AND WHY TO CONSIDER HIRING A PROFESSIONAL RESUME WRITER

Why are resume writers in business? Many reasons, of course, but I think the two most important points about resume writers is 1) they are professional writers and marketers and 2) they help people market themselves when those people find it too difficult to see their own accomplishments and approach writing their marketing collateral (their resume and cover letter) from an objective standpoint.

I am going to give it to you straight—I have seen thousands and thousands of resumes, and I have written almost that many too. I have only rarely seen a self-written resume that rivaled what a professional writer can do. But I think that goes without saying. If you have the coin to invest in yourself with a good resume writer, I think it's a very wise investment in your career and will save you many hours of time trying to write it yourself.

A few other other circumstances that come to mind where you should seriously consider investing in a professional (certified) resume writer include:

- If you are applying for government positions and filling out “KSAs.”
- If you are changing industries or attempting to move up in position.
- Have any challenges in your job search that are really concerning you.
- If you just need an edge. Generally, investing in a professionally designed resume ends up paying for itself and actually yields a bigger payoff. In many cases, having your resume professionally written is also tax deductible (check with your CPA).

How to Choose a Professional Resume Writer

Understand why a good fit is important.

This is the person who is going to help market you, draw out your greatest strengths, guide you toward your ideal industry and position, and possibly much more. You are putting a large part of your career success in their hands. You should like them and trust them. You need to have a good connection with this individual so they can help you.

Make sure they have ample experience.

I am sure there are lots of great resume writers out there who are new to the industry. However, you are probably going to have better success overall by choosing a writer who has a good amount of experience (the more senior the executive, the more experience you want your resume writer to have—working, of course, at your level).

Make sure they are certified.

You also will benefit from peace of mind knowing they are certified. Career Directors International is my favorite. Their credentials are tough to obtain (a good thing), require annual renewal, and keep members abreast of the latest trends and techniques. Their classes, tele-seminars, and conferences are amazing and are geared to help career services professionals hone their craft.

What is their style?

You want to really make sure that you gel with their style. Are they very businesslike and detail-oriented, or more friendly and informal?

How does that fit with your style?

With my website, for example (www.maryelizabethbradford.com), you can tell right away I convey a highly personal, friendly, and caring approach. I was very careful to design my site to communicate this to my clients and potential clients. Why? Because I want to attract and help professionals who are drawn to how I work best . . . which will, in turn, help me bring out the best in them!

Do you resonate with them?

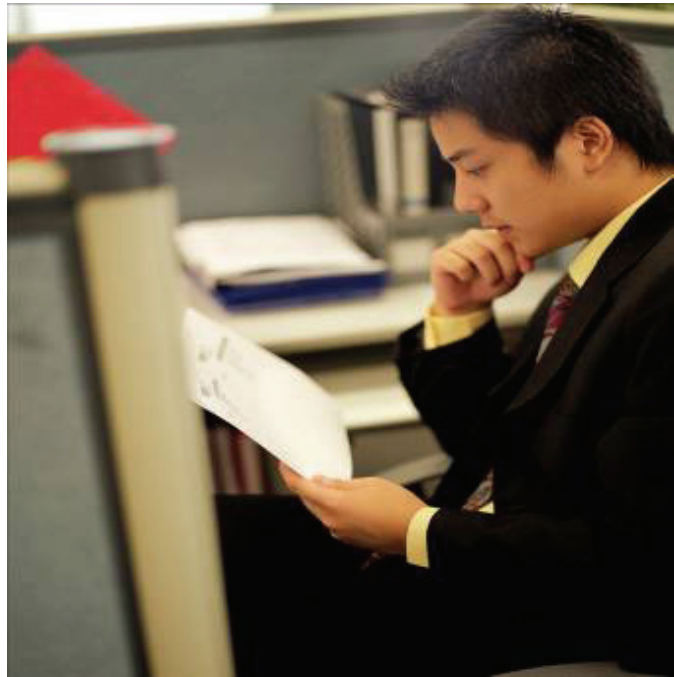
Here is a quick and easy way to discern whether or not you resonate with your resume writer/career coach:

Look at their website . . . do you like how it looks, are you drawn to it, and do you relate to the content? Are you excited about the products and services? If they know how to market themselves, chances are that's a great sign they will know how to market you!

Talk to them . . . does the conversation flow smoothly? Are they asking you a lot of questions in order to better understand your situation?

If the call was an appointment, were they on time? Have they returned your emails promptly? Do you feel that they understand your situation and have offered at least a general overview of what they can do to help you? Do you feel excited . . . or drained and overwhelmed at the conversation's end?

If you get a funny feeling or sense it's not going to be a fit, then quickly move on! It doesn't necessarily mean that the resume writer/career coach is a bad one, but it could mean they are just not a good fit for you.



A word about money.

I truly believe you should hire the very best you can afford. These professionals are paid to draw out and market your key skills and abilities and pull you forward in terms of everything career success means to you.

This is an investment in yourself—a serious one that helps you achieve wonderful results. Barring a few exceptions, this isn't the time to go bargain-basement shopping.

By keeping these simple points in mind, you can move forward with your resume writer/career coach of choice with excitement and confidence!

You will be amazed at how your “partner” and “coach” will help you in more ways than you may have imagined during your job search. Having someone you like, trust, and enjoy working with, walking with you step-by-step towards your goals will make getting there easier, quicker, and more enjoyable.

To find Certified Resume Writers, visit <http://www.careerdirectors.com> to search for and evaluate potential resume writers.

Look for award-winning and custom resume formats. Here are some additional links:

<http://www.maryelizabethbradford.com/resumesamples.php>

http://www.careerdirectors.com/tori_2010.htm

OVERCOMING LIABILITIES—RESUME WRITING TIPS

Nearly all my clients tell me they have at least one major liability that is hurting their chances of landing their dream job. These concerns include a long job search, many jobs over several years, age concerns, being fired or laid off, a bad relationship with a past boss or company, changing industries/reentering the workforce, or no degree or certifications, to name a few.

Interestingly, the three main components I share with my clients that they need to be successful and achieve their goals are the same ones that make most of these liabilities go away:

- A clear focus of direction.
- Powerful, professional marketing collateral (resume, value proposition letter).
- The right job search strategies.

If you have these three components in your job search you will do better than the majority of job seekers today.

In this chapter we will be focusing on step 2, which is having powerful, professional marketing collateral that helps minimize your job search liabilities. The purpose of using these tactics as you write your resume is never to lie, of course. It is to market yourself so your reader garners enough interest in you to call you in for an interview. To do this, you want to minimize any red flags (real or mistakenly perceived).

As you craft your resume using these tips below to overcome any potential liabilities you face, please remember to use the custom resume templates I have developed for you. These templates are designed to highlight keywords and phrases and provide you with a way to “plug in” the right information from beginning to end—making the process of matching your new resume to your position of choice much more automatic with more powerful results.

Gaps in Employment

If, for whatever reason, you have a gap in your employment, it is generally not appropriate to write about the reasons in your resume or cover letter because you run the risk of raising a red flag more so than not. In most cases, your best bet is to minimize attention to the gap. One way you can do this is to use years versus months when listing your dates of employment. Say 2006-2010 versus April 2006 to January 2010.

If you are changing industries and you have some spotty gaps of employment you can organize things while minimizing attention to dates by separating out industry- and non industry-related experience. Simply organize your professional history like this:

Industry Related Experience

Position and Title, Location, Date

Position and Title, Location, Date

Other Experience

Position and Title, Location, Date

Position and Title, Location, Date

Use a Functional Resume Format

You can use a single-page resume with your transferrable skills first, followed by your academic credentials and, finally, at the bottom of the page, your professional experience. You can be as brief as just listing the company name, your title, and your dates of employment. This helps to minimize attention to industries and/or positions not relevant to your career goals.

Employment Gaps—Long Job Search or Career Hiatus

If you have been in a long job search or took a hiatus from employment for a time, there are many things you can do to weave this information into your resume in a positive way.

Long job search: If you have been volunteering, finishing a degree, or doing some independent consulting or project work for your previous company or project work for other companies, you can list this on your resume to minimize a long job search. Here is a possible example:

Consulting Projects (2010-present)

Company 1

Company 2

Company 3

Gaps in Employment Chapter Tips:

- Use years, not months.
- Separate out industry- and non industry-related positions.
- Use a pure functional resume format.
- Fill in time gaps with volunteer activities, travel experiences, home management.

Lack of Degree(s)

Many clients I work with—including C-level executives, have not received their college degree for one reason or another. Most job postings will state this as a requirement, which is daunting for individuals who have accomplished much in their career but do not have a college education.

Fortunately in most ALL these cases, these individuals went on to continue to be amazing producers of results in their careers and were recruited into exceptional positions with fantastic companies despite their lack of degree.

How did they do it? My friend Mark Hovind, President of Jobbait, puts it this way:

“I turn lead into gold but only have a fifth grade education . . . want to hire me?”

If you produce results or, more aptly, if you “turn lead into gold” and make or save a company money—you are worth hiring. Ivy League college degree or not! Your resume and cover letter must speak to the results you bring to the company in quantifiable %% \$\$ whenever possible.

Here are some additional tips:

- If you have determined it will truly be beneficial for helping to land the position you want, enroll in something NOW. Then state on your resume like this:

Candidate: *degree or certification, school, estimated graduation or completion date.*

- Use your current experience as your “degree.”
- Make your resume extra strong using marketing techniques that sell you, such as:
 - Testimonials from clients, past bosses, employees, vendors, and/or committee members.
 - Quantifying your achievements—as listed above, focus on the results you bring in \$\$ and %%.
 - Remember that less is more—every word you delete from your resume that doesn’t absolutely need to be there creates an increasingly compelling document.

Fired or Laid Off:

Many of my clients have been fired or laid off. Many professionals will experience this unfortunate event at least once in their careers. This does not have to be a point of contention with potential employers during your job search and it does not have to detract from the accomplishments of your career and your strengths. Here are a few points to consider:

- Don’t mention being fired or laid off in your resume.

There is absolutely no benefit that I can think of that would justify mentioning a lay off or firing on a resume. Period.

- WHY were you fired or laid off? Identify exactly why.

Prior to your your interview—develop a SHORT, clear script of what happened and why. Be sure not to go on and on—that can open a can of worms and create more questions than answers.

- If your department was eliminated:

If your company restructured or moved overseas, simply say in your cover letter:

“My company restructured” or “My company recently moved its operations overseas.”

- Get multiple testimonials from the company you were fired or laid off from.

This is one of the most powerful steps you can take. Third-party testimonials and endorsements cover you, build trust, and quell suspicions and assumptions faster than any other marketing strategy I know of.

- How to get testimonials:

- Ask for short quotes relating to areas you were most successful in that have to do with the position you want now.
- Pick at least 5-10 contacts.
- Call or ask them for SHORT QUOTES. Not letters. Tell them WHAT you want them to write about. They can send it to you in a short email. Make it easy for them!
- Compile these quotes on a separate page you can use as an addendum to your resume.
- Use the “quote,” then write the person’s name, title, and company.
- The shorter the better. If your contact has given you a text-heavy paragraph with much superfluous information, pick out the sweet spot and don’t use the rest. Here is an example:

Example #1:

“I am primarily a technologist and have worked with a number of marketing consultants over my career; Joe is the best person I have ever worked with when it comes to building convincing cost models around technology products that customers can get their arms around. He is exceptionally creative, while at the same time relentlessly pursuing important details, and without him we would not have been able to identify several significant opportunities.”

Bob xxxx, Chief Technology Officer, Photon-X, Malvern PA

This is good—but you could also just say:

“Joe is the best person I have ever worked with when it comes to building convincing cost models around technology products that customers can get their arms around.”

Bob xxxx, Chief Technology Officer, Photon-X, Malvern PA

See what a difference that makes? Which endorsement was more impactful to you?

Example #2:

“Joe is a high energy, positive and inquisitive guy who certainly knows his way around the global optical components industry. For example, he played a particularly important role in RKK’s fledgling M&A practice, introducing Seisors as a client—which resulted in a \$650 million sell-side transaction—and attracted key investors during our cash raise for ISS Systems. In addition, he was a co-founder of the fast growing OC market research practice at RKK, which still continues today under our company banner.”

Mark Smith, former CEO, RKK Inc. ■ San Francisco, CA

A nice testimonial. But assuming the full story didn’t absolutely need to be narrated, we could also say:

“Joe played a particularly important role in RKK’s fledgling Mergers & Acquisitions practice, introducing Seisors as a client—which resulted in a \$650 million sell-side transaction and attracted key investors.”

Mark Smith, former CEO, RKK Inc. ■ San Francisco, CA

This is easier and shorter to read—which means it has a bigger impact. We picked out the key area—his quantifiable results, or how much money he helped this company make.

- You can also put one or two testimonials right into your resume.
- Don’t shy away from listing all of your successes in your resume about your role with a company you were let go from!

Age Concerns:

My senior level clients are often concerned about “age discrimination.” Although I am sure in some cases there might be some truth to this, but I prefer to focus on the positive aspects of the benefits a company gains from hiring a professional with a lifetime of knowledge and experience to bring to the table.

It’s interesting to note that if you are a professional over 50 years old, the more you focus on the results you can bring to the table and essentially holding the right mindset will set the tone and pace of all your career-related conversations and interviews.

There have been multiple articles and studies written about a very possible shortage in executive talent by 2018 due to mass retiring of Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) out of the workforce. For example, a 2010 study conducted by Barry Bluestone and Mark Melnik from the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University estimated that by 2018 there could be more than five million unfilled jobs in the United States due to a lack of Baby Boomers in the workforce.

In my opinion, the actual increased need for expertise in a particular post or industry means that Baby Boomers should focus on their areas of expertise and specialization, really concentrate on the expertise they bring to the table, and highlight the mentoring they can provide to younger team members. This goes back to branding, as outlined in previous chapters.

Fortunately for most professionals with over 20 years of experience, identifying the areas where they shine and what they most love to do is usually very clear to them.

Here are some additional points you can apply to your resume that will help minimize any potential red flags and maximize your candidacy:

- Don't go back more than 20 years in your experience unless you absolutely have to.
- Don't list dates you were in the military.
- Don't list dates you graduated from college.
- Don't list dates of every training course you have been through in the last 30 years.
- Make sure the content you list in your resume is fresh and relevant.
- Demonstrate you are current on trends, certifications, emerging technologies, and new management structures or generally new ways of doing business.
- Realize that many credible sources have warned of a looming shortage in senior executives as Baby Boomers retire out of the market and Gen Y employees pose new and difficult challenges for companies.
- Consider management consulting.

Mark Hovind, President of Jobbait.com, has written extensively on the benefits of management consulting and has helped many executives break into this market which Mr. Hovind estimates has grown over 44% in the last decade. You can learn more here: <http://www.jobbait.com/a/solo.html>

- Be SURE to keyword match your ideal job search using indeed.com and insert these keywords into the first page of your resume.
- Unless you are going after a high visibility C-level position, keep your resume to 2 pages.

Changing Industries

Perhaps the largest group of jobseekers I help are those who wish to change industries or positions within their industry. The good news is that, although most jobseekers believe they have to take a big pay cut to do it, this has been the exception and not the rule with my clients.

How did they do it? Once they determined their industry or position of choice and upgraded their resume and other marketing materials to support them, they learned how to tap into the hidden job market and go direct in order to make their move. Learning how to tap the hidden job market is by far the most valuable skill you can learn in your job search. Please see my book in this same series on this critical topic: *The Career Artisan Series—Tap the Hidden Job Market: Guide for the Perplexed*.

Resume Tips for Changing Industries

- Create a functional resume. Format your resume in a “functional” style that highlights functional strengths and transferrable skills that match your new position/industry.
- Outline quantifiable achievements in the strengths you want to highlight. Example: customer service—“increased customer satisfaction by 79%.”
- Group keywords under a list called core competencies or key strengths. You can include areas of study that match your new industry and secondary things that might be important in your new industry like speaking more than one language or cross-cultural communications.
- Volunteer activities: if you have been involved in volunteer or community activities that enhance or match your industry of choice, you can put that together with your academic achievements on the first page of your resume.
- Use the indeed.com mirroring technique outlined in Chapter 1 to make certain you have all the right keywords in your resume:
 - Go to www.indeed.com.
 - Find an example of your ideal job.
 - **Highlight all the keywords and phrases** you see where you match.
 - Weave those keywords throughout your resume.

Example:

VP Marketing—XYZ Corporation

Summary of Position

The Vice President Marketing is responsible for the planning, **development** and implementation of marketing plans and activities including the **identification of markets, estimations of sales volumes and profits, the pricing and margin strategies of product lines, drive strategic growth strategies and assures a consistent marketing and communication approach across business units.**

The position requires an understanding of global markets, latest electronics industries technology trends, and competitive market strategies. To be successful in this role, the candidate must have a solid understanding of our (or similar) Electronic, Electrical and Transportation product and the global routes to market.

The success of the position is measured by increased sales penetration into existing accounts, by sales growth with new customers and markets as well as leading our marketing strategy and strategic growth initiatives across all business units.

Principal Accountabilities

- Lead strategic development of marketing strategies that develops and implements plans and activities including identification of market, estimates of sales volume and profits; and pricing and margin strategies for specific products to establish, enhance or distinguish product placement within our markets.
- Lead growth and emerging market initiatives leveraging direct and dotted line resources. Own and report on pro-forma P&Ls on key initiatives.
- Utilizes market research, monitors competitive activity, trends and selling strategies and identifies customer needs. Works with engineering, manufacturing, sales and outbound marketing to develop new products or enhance existing product(s) based on internal and external needs and capabilities, including market size, user needs and available technology.
- Recruit, develop and motivate a skilled Marketing and Product Management team capable of growing the business significantly in the years ahead.
- Lead or direct implementation of tactics and resources necessary to achieve Product Management and Marketing Communication objectives, including advertising, media, public relations, trade shows, web presence, e-marketing.
- Develops portfolio business plans, strategies and product positioning for strategic growth initiatives. Responsible for coordination of product/program development, including financial, market and technical justification for product selection and definitions.
- Perform financial justification of new products; help establish and manage pricing policy for the full product line, working with Finance to meet the organization's financial goals.
- Lead the Company's efforts to acquire & analyze customer and market data to understand our customers' requirements and our competitors' activities, and steer our organization and marketing efforts accordingly.

GENERAL GRAMMAR TIPS

Here are some simple grammar tips to follow when writing your own resume.

Grammar & Usage

- Resumes are written in “implied first person style.” So instead of saying, “I am a seasoned leader of large departmental teams,” say, “A seasoned leader of large, departmental teams.” In other words, personal pronouns (I, me, mine, we, us, our) should not be used in a resume.
- Do not use “etc.” in a resume as it’s too informal.
- Under your employment history, speak in the present tense about your present position (if still employed) and in the past tense for all prior positions.

Numbers

- Use monetary (\$) and percentage (%) signs and numbers versus writing them out.
- Write out monetary figures like this: \$1 million, \$1 billion, and \$100,000. Do not use abbreviations such as \$15K or \$15M.
- Spell out single-digit numbers and use numerals (10, 11, 12) for two-digit numbers.

General Punctuation

- Ampersands (&) may be used in headings, tables, and titles only.
- Avoid using excessive quotes.
- Semicolons indicate separation, not connection.
- Use 8 years’ experience or 8 years of experience. Not 8 years (or 8 year’s) experience.
- Hyphenate two nouns that form an adjective. A deep-brown coat—or when one word ends in ED—a full-bodied wine.

Capitalization

- Position titles are capitalized when used as proper nouns, referring to a specific person.

Sentence Structure

- Start sentences with a noun or action verb when possible.
- Front load accomplishments with quantifiable results first (%% or \$\$).

Education

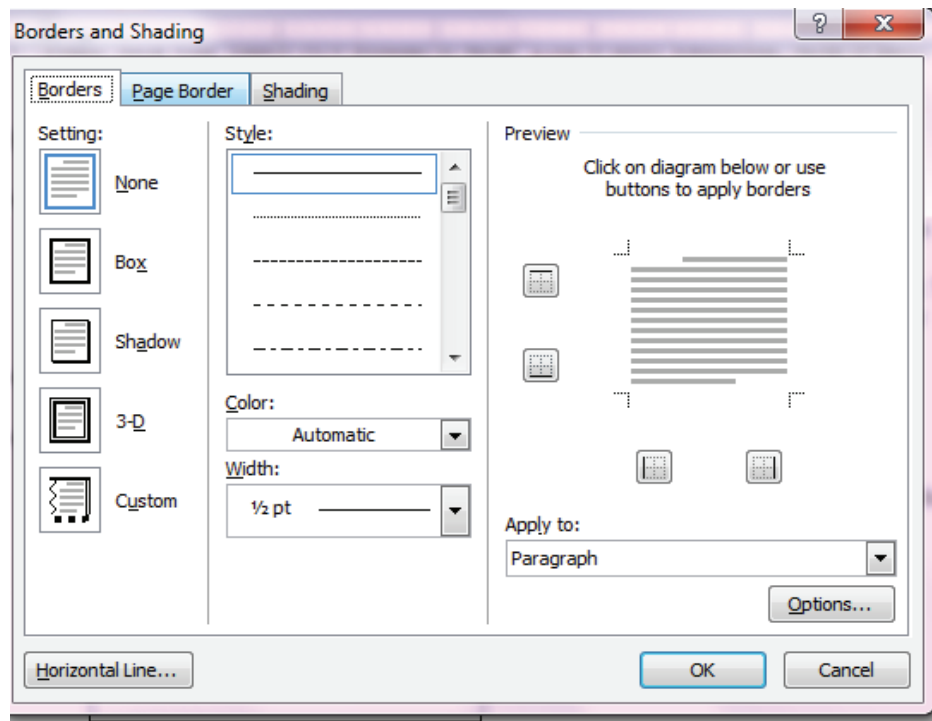
- Do not use graduation dates under the education section of a resume.
- Spell out degree: Master of Business Administration, not MBA.
- Do not use the word “degree” when listing degree.
- Include professional development training as applicable.

MS WORD DESIGN TIPS

Hopefully you will take full advantage of the custom resume templates available to you through purchasing this book. The link, username, and password are found in the following chapter titled: **Website Links to Custom Resume Templates Designed by Internationally Certified Advanced Resume Writer, Mary Elizabeth Bradford, CERW, MCD.**

However, in case you may need some basic tips for creating documents in MS Word, here are a few pointers:

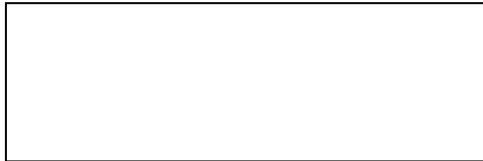
- **How to create a border:**
 - Go to page layout/borders/page border. Choose your width and color. It's best to choose a very thin black or gray line.
 - Know that depending on your printer settings, borders may or may not print out. You can always change the margin settings on your computer or simply remove your border for printing if this happens.
- **How to create a line to separate areas:**
 - Go to "Page Borders."
 - Click on the "Borders" tab.



- Use the diagram box on the right to click in your lines wherever you want them.

- **How to create a text box:**

- To insert a text box (to call out an accomplishment or a testimonial):
- Go to insert/text box. On some versions of Word the text box is found under text box tools/format.
- Insert your box where you want it.



- Anchor your cursor inside the text box and add your text.
- Go to text box tools; click on format.
- Click on fill or the gradient color boxes to fill in your box with a background color.



- To align your text box neatly with your text go to “text wrapping” and choose “square” or “tight.”

- **Font tips:** It really looks nice to bold and shadow the text at the top of your resume. Here is an example of the text bolded. This is a very simple command you will find under “fonts” :

Vice President Global Sales High Performance Team Management

- To shadow your font, go to fonts and checkmark the box that says “shadow.” Here is what it looks like:

Vice President Global Sales High Performance Team Management

- You can also change the font color under “fonts.” Safe colors are mid-grey, dark burgundy, and dark blue:

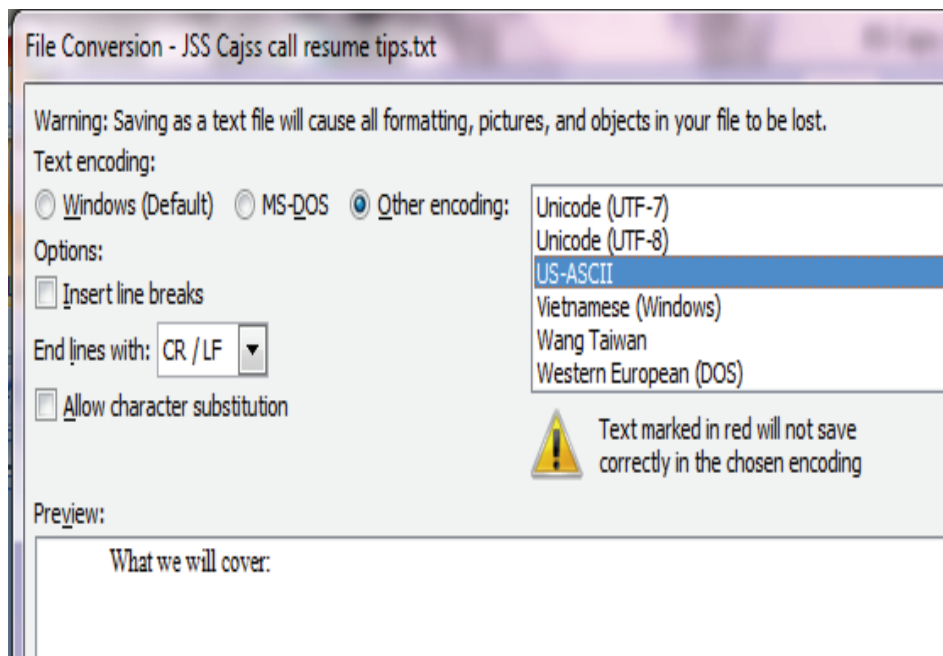
Vice President Global Sales High Performance Team Management

HOW TO CREATE DIFFERENT RESUME VERSIONS AND HOW YOU MIGHT USE THEM

- MS Word (.doc): Is supposed to be upward and downward compatible for users of MS Word.
- ASCII text (.txt): Use for cutting and pasting into Internet resume forms and emails.
- PDF document: send your resume as a PDF to prevent formatting errors; it also gives you tamper protection.

How to create an ASCII text version of your resume:

- Go to file/save as.
- Click on Other Formats or Plain Text (depending on what version of word you use).
- Checkmark the circle that says: other encoding and choose in the box to the right: US-ASCII. This screen looks like this:



- A screen will pop up stating you might lose some design capabilities. Just click okay.
- Save this version to your desktop.
- Now you will see an icon of a notepad on your desktop. This is your text resume.
- As a final step, it's wise to open this document and add line breaks to your right margin so you create a long, skinny, left-justified document. By doing this you will be able to

easily cut and paste your text resume into electronic resume submission boxes—without having to reformat or clean up your text resume each time you do.

- It will look something like this:

ROBERT (BOB) XXX
XXXX Anywhere Drive Tampa, Florida XXXX
Tel: 000000000 Email: XXXXX@gmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY EXPERT
REVENUE DRIVING SALES STRATEGIES
RAPID MARKET EXPANSIONS
NEW SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGIES

A deeply accomplished executive with over 20 years of verifiable success pioneering B2B sales and marketing strategies that generate multi-million dollar revenue streams.

Unique ability to develop high-performance nationwide sales teams, win key accounts, and turn around underperforming companies, territories and products.

KEY EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS:

- * Grew sales by 100% in under 24 months.
- * Captured 200+ dealer contracts in under 6 months.
- * Landed key clients: BMW, Toyota, Wachovia, and Bank of America.
- * Won multiple awards for both individual and team sales accomplishments.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- * Strategic Marketing Plans/Research
- * New Market Penetration
- * Consultive Selling
- * Product Development & Launches
- * National Sales Training/Management
- * Business/Financial Planning/Reporting
- * Client, Channel, and Dealer Relations
- * Automotive Software/Technologies
- * Auctions/Fleet Sales/Dealerships
- * Vehicle Recovery/Remarketing
- * Dealer Management Systems

- * Internet Marketing Campaigns
- * Entrepreneurial Drive
- * Effective Problem Solver
- * Compelling Communicator
- * Adaptable/Strategic/Focused
- * Positive and Grounded Leader
- * Able to Travel/Relocate

How to create a PDF version of your resume:

- If you don't have the latest version of Word you can download a FREE Word to PDF converter at www.primopdf.com.
- If you do have the latest version of Word, simply open your resume, click on file/save as/PDF or XMS.

How to determine which resume version to send out—possible scenarios:

**Source: Career Directors International—used with permission*

- ▶ **You want to put your resume on the Internet, somewhere like a jobboard.com or at a specific company site.**

Use your ASCII text resume—this file will cut and paste easily. To cut and paste into forms on the Internet, you must:

1. Open the file where you have saved your ASCII text resume in WordPad, Word, Works, or other word processing program.
2. Go to Edit and click on “Select All” or highlight text with your cursor if you know how.
3. Go back to Edit menu and click on “Copy.”
4. Go to the form on the Internet and click your cursor where you want to insert the text.
5. Hit the right button (or back button) on your mouse. A menu will pop up. Select “Paste” from the menu. Your text should appear in the box.
6. Review text for accuracy of layout.

- ▶ **The ad or person asks you to send your resume but doesn't say what format to use.**

It is best to cover your bases here and send a Word and a text version of the resume via email.

Cut and paste your cover letter and resume from your ASCII text resume file in the body of the email message.

1. In the final paragraph of the cover letter, change “my resume is enclosed . . .” to read, “For your convenience, my text resume is pasted below and attached in MS Word.”
2. Now, open your .doc resume file in MS Word. Delete any unnecessary pages like the reference page and/or cover letter. Resave the file under a new name (it is a good idea to use your name) such as *Smith.doc*.
3. Close the file.
4. Use the “attach” function from your email provider to attach the resume to your email.
5. Note: If you do not have MS Word or you know the recipient doesn’t, you should use an .rtf (rich text file). You should be able to open it while preserving most of the format in other word processing programs.

► **III. You are asked to forward your resume in MS Word.**

It is a safe bet to use .doc which is a Word XP format.

1. Cut and paste cover letter in a text format in the body of email message.
2. In the final paragraph of the cover letter, change “my resume is enclosed . . .” to read, “As requested, my resume is attached for your review.”
3. Now, open your .doc resume file in MS Word, if you have it. Delete any unnecessary pages like the cover letter. Resave the file under a new name such as “*lastname.doc*.”
4. Use the “attach” function from your email provider to attach the resume to your email.
5. If you do not have MS Word, it is fine to perform steps #2-4 using you’re your .rtf file which you can open in another word processing program. The file will be Word compatible as long as it is in .rtf.

► **You want to send a tamper-proof version of your resume as an email attachment:**

You should start with the MS Word version. Open it; click on save as.

If you are using the latest version of MS Word, one of your save as options will be: PDF or XPS. Click on this option and your file will be saved as a PDF version.

If you don’t have the latest version of Word you can download a FREE Word-to-PDF converter at www.primopdf.com.

WEBSITE LINKS TO CUSTOM RESUME TEMPLATES

Designed by Mary Elizabeth Bradford, CERW, MCD—Internationally Certified Advanced Resume Writer

I have created three customized resume templates in MS Word that will make it incredibly easy for you to plug in your information. These particular templates are visually stimulating and work really well to automatically emphasize the right keywords and strengths.

A word about borders:

A border on a resume may or may not print out depending on your printer. If you have trouble, consider taking your resume to a print shop to be printed or simply remove the borders from your resume by doing the following:

In word, click on “Page Borders.”

Click on each border edge of the diagram box to the right to remove it.

Click OK.

Instructions for downloading your resume templates:

Click on this link:

<http://www.maryelizabethbradford.com/21stcenturyresume.php>

Key in the following username and password:

Username: 21cr

Password: VIP (case sensitive)

Click on each of the template links; select Save in the resulting dialog box. Save to your desktop or browse to a specific folder on your computer.

BONUS: THE 21ST CENTURY COVER LETTER: THE VALUE PROPOSITION LETTER

Cover letters are so critically important to making the right first impression; you just can't afford to go wrong here. Oftentimes I see jobseekers putting all the emphasis on creating a great resume while skimping on the cover letter.

Over the years my cover letters have gotten MUCH shorter and, with the guidance of my mentor, Mark Hovind, President of Jobbait.com, have evolved into what Mark has coined as “The Value Proposition Letter.”

The value proposition letter (VPL) has some very specific traits which I have outlined below. For 3 years now, I have only exclusively written VPLs for my clients and I have watched clients secure interviews time and time again by JUST sending a VPL as a standalone document! So now, I teach my clients how to use the VPL in their job search to tap into the hidden job market. If you want to learn a step-by-step system to do this, please check out my other e-book in this same series: *The Career Artisan Series—Tap the Hidden Job Market: Guide for the Perplexed*.

Traits of a Value Proposition Letter

- **A statement of value.** Briefly answers the question: what good are you to me and my company?
- **Briefly describes your quantifiable results.** Speaks directly to the \$\$ %% results you bring.
- **Less than 150 words.** Short and powerful—shorter letters get read. Long letters get skimmed or not read at all.
- **Directed to a key decision maker.** Traditional letters get sent to internal recruiters, HR, or the “hiring manager” with very limited results. VPLs are sent to the CEO, COO, or division president.

Why does it work?

- **VPLs are results-focused.** Again, a VPL is solely focused on your quantifiable results, not your soft skills or “what you do.” In a VPL every single word counts. Or this reason, although they are shorter, they are often more difficult to write.
- **VPLs are short.** They get read, from top to bottom, period.
- **VPLs demonstrate to the reader that “you get it.”** Key executives are focused on the big picture and bottom-line results. They are naturally wired to find interest in a short and sweet letter describing what happens when you do what you do. HR, internal recruiters, and hiring managers are more hard-wired to focus on matching up tasks and qualifications.

How do VPLs differ from a standard cover letter?

- Cover letters are long and are “skimmed” just like a resume. Shorter resumes with specific words and phrases bolded, tables, charts, and call out boxes with testimonials and sections that are highly organized and readable like a “framed story” have proven to get more results. VPLs that are much shorter and more direct have a similar, powerful effect.
- Cover letters are packed with soft skills like “team player” and words like “driven.” VPLs have none of this language or “filler.”

Multiple ways to use VPLs in your job search

- Send to a company for a posted job.
- Send with or without a resume.
- Use for going direct when tapping into the hidden job market.
- Use for sending to recruiters.

Additional VPL Tips

Tip #1: Shorter is Better

Write your letter, then come back in a couple of hours and take out all the superfluous words and phrases you find. Next, highlight all your BEST words and phrases (you will probably have a couple to add or reword at this point). Finally, revisit your letter in another hour and edit any erroneous words just one more time. Now you are left with a tight, crystal-clear letter, brimming with power-hitting terminology!

You won't have to do this with every cover letter you write. After you practice this technique a few times you will quickly learn to get it right the first time!

Tip #2: Simplify Your Language

Want to know the mark of a really good VPL? An interview of course, yes . . . but aside from that, give it to someone to read who is in another industry. If they are impressed by your accomplishments and can understand what you are communicating, this is a really good sign you have an effective letter.

Specifically, your letter should be understandable by someone not directly linked to your position of interest. It should be simple and clearly outline your accomplishments.

A big mistake I often see in executive level cover letters is a string of hundred-dollar words in a sentence. Check your letter and remove any strings of “eye-glazers,” as I like to call them. You will be amazed how this will lighten and brighten up your letter instantly.

Tip #3: Be Focused—Be Clear

You must know why you are writing what you are writing. Either you are writing a general value proposition about your strengths and achievements in a particular role (CEO/COO/VP of Operations) or you are responding to a job opening.

In either case, you want to be completely focused on communicating your maximum value. If you shine in two key areas, write about them and remember to finish your statements with examples of results you have obtained. If you can add a % or \$ to those results, that is preferable.

If you are responding to an actual job description, the most important thing you can do is highlight all the keywords and phrases in that job description that you match and parrot those key words and phrases back in your cover letter. If you have ever written a job description, you know how maddening it is to read through a stack of cover letters that mention little, if anything, that matches what you are looking for! A resume attached to a cover letter like this rarely gets read.

Tip #4: Create a PS

- Post scripts get read.
- Say something important to the position.
- Keep it short and simple.
- Keep it focused on one subject.

Value Proposition Letter 15 Point Checklist

Here are some tips you can use as a checklist against your value proposition letter draft. I am deeply appreciative to Mark Hovind, President of Jobbait.com, who is the originator of the Value Proposition Letter and this checklist. Again, Mark has been gracious enough to mentor me on the finer points of the value proposition letter for the last several years.

Use the letter examples listed below as your template. When you have your draft, simply check it against the following 15 points for a fast, easy model you can use effectively again and again!

- Your opening line begins with a question: “Do you need . . .” or “Would you like . . .”
- Your opening statement describes a problem they might be having (Have your revenues dipped due to the economic downturn?).
- You list three bullets that present the “proof” of what you are stating, starting with the strongest benefit.
- You use "you" twice as often as "I" in your letter.
- Your letter is easy to read, using short sentences and paragraphs.
- You use power words and write with the goal of keeping your reader's interest.
- You have used specific numbers and facts in your letter to build instant credibility.
- Your strong words and phrases are highlighted or bolded to draw attention and keep the reader focused.
- Your letter is written in a friendly, active, conversational, "me to you" tone of voice.
- You have used specific numbers and facts in your copy to build instant credibility.
- You have eliminated any three-dollar words and fancy or overly technical phrases. Your letter is crisp, clear, concise and easy to read.
- Your TOTAL word count is under 150 words.
- Use Times New Roman 12 point. Top executives are generally older and appreciate this.
- Your heading (name and title up at the top should be appropriately sized and in upper and lower case—no larger than 16 point).
- Don't use fancy bullets—just use bullets (●). Keep bulleted lines to 2 lines max.

—courtesy of Mark Hovind of JobBait.com. Used with permission.

Value Proposition Letter Example #1

Mark Smith

1247 Right Way Road

Boerne, TX 78006

Tel: 830-331-9399

Email: marksmith@gmail.com

<Date>

<Full Name>

<Title>

<Business Name>

<Street>

<City, State Zip>

<Greeting>

Would you like help managing your way through this tough economy?

As Executive Sales Director for a Fortune 100 financial services company, I created record growth and earnings by developing strong analytics and performance-based metrics for both sales and service.

My accomplishments include:

- Increased EBIT 67% in 3 years.
- Increased loan volume 116% in 4 years.
- Increased credit quality and compliance by 37%.

Although my recent compensation has been north of \$200,000, I would love to explore opportunities with a significant stake in the outcome. Please call or email and let's arrange a time to chat.

Sincerely,

Mark Smith

Value Proposition Letter Example #2

Courtesy of Mark Hovind, www.Jobbait.com. Used with permission

Your Name
1234 Your Street Auburn, WA 98001
Tel: 555-555-5555 Email: You@YourEmail.com

(Date)

Mr. Decision Maker
President and CEO
Your Targeted Company
P.O. Box 1234
City, ST 56789

Dear Mr. Decision-Maker,

Do you need a dependable Janitor?

As Janitor for Widget Enterprises, I improved the cleanliness of their building and reduced maintenance costs more than any other Janitor in the history of their company. Here are a few specifics:

- Saved \$20,000 per year by upgrading lighting fixtures to fluorescent.
- Reduced visitor waiting time to zero by opening on time for three years in a row.
- Improved response time for maintenance issues 50% by implementing an email request-for-services system.

Our company was recently sold, and I am looking for a position that allows me to contribute in a meaningful way. I should mention that my recent compensation has been north of \$12 per hour.

Please call me and let's explore how I can help you. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Your Name

P.S. I was formally recognized by Widget Enterprises for my outstanding contributions. You can find details on my website at www.MyWebsite.com.

***Alternative:**

PS. I was formally recognized by Widget Enterprises for my outstanding contributions. You can find details on my profile at www.linkedin/myname.com

Value Proposition Letter Example #3

Anna Silver
8675 Lauren Drive
Spokane, WA 98965
Tel: 756-338-0098
Email: Anna@gmail.com

<Date>

<Full Name>

<Title>

<Business Name>

<Street>

<City, State Zip>

<Greeting>

Would you like some help from a seasoned President and CEO?

I just completed the turnaround of a \$70 million consumer products company at a time when our industry was moving overseas. In fact, **we increased our market share from 9% to 15% in the past 2 years.**

Here are a few highlights:

- **Increased revenue by 17%** by introducing new products.
- **Reduced overhead by \$420,000 per year** by consolidating operating units.
- **Raised net income by \$1.4 million per year.**

Our company was recently acquired by a larger competitor who is now managing all operations and I would like to explore opportunities that include an investment. Please call me and let's explore your opportunities. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anna Silver

FOLLOW UP SECRETS

ENDORSEMENTS, TESTIMONIALS, AND REFERENCES—YOUR SECRET WEAPONS



There is nothing like a third-party endorsement to earn someone’s trust and respect.

You must remember that, when meeting people for the first time, they are at a disadvantage. They haven’t had the pleasure of knowing you, your skills, your work habits, your strengths, and your history. When you meet with a potential employer you are, in effect, painting a picture with your marketing collateral—and it’s up to you how that picture looks to someone else.

References, endorsements, and testimonials most always have a greater impact than any other piece of information we can give a potential employer because it comes from a third-party perspective, which legitimizes you and authenticates what you are probably communicating with them yourself. It builds trust very rapidly—more rapidly than any other way that I know. Suffice it to say that having a page of testimonials you can use as a “leave behind” or attach with a post-interview thank-you letter is one of THE WISEST moves you can make in your job search.

But you have to do it right.

You *don’t* want to attach letters of recommendation (too long). You *do* want to create one or two pages of short quotes from people who have worked with you in the recent past.

Use LinkedIn to Get Endorsements

I strongly recommend having a LinkedIn profile. You should invite to your list of connections (everyone connected to your career history with the exception of your current employer that is—if you want to keep your job search a secret).

Once you have invited your past bosses, vendors, clients, and associates to connect through LinkedIn, then begin to write them unsolicited endorsements. Your contacts will appreciate this and LinkedIn will automatically ask them if they wish to reciprocate—which many of them will. This is the quickest way to garner endorsements using LinkedIn.

A Few More Tips on Gathering References

Marketing yourself may not be your first love. But making sure your references back up your achievements with their endorsements is critical. Here are some additional tips to getting them.

Become a “Reference Collector”

From here on out, consider “collecting” references and testimonials well before you think you might need them, or to set a goal of obtaining two or three testimonials or references each year no matter what. You can accomplish this by simply telling your potential references that you are gathering testimonials as you go . . . as part of your long-term strategic career goals.

Widen Your Pool of Potential References

Do you know that many other people other than your immediate boss can be a highly compelling reference? You can get references from colleagues, people that work for you or with you, clients, vendors, and even co-members of associations or boards on which you serve. You can simply ask them to focus on giving a reference from their particular vantage point (how you are as a boss, what you are like to work with in a volunteer capacity, etc.)

Ask for a Written Reference

Why not ask for powerful, short performance statements in lieu of the more typical “letter of reference”? I put together a one- to two-page document for my clients filled with short statements from all sorts of credible references speaking from their unique vantage points (see below).

The result is a reference page that reads like a list of 5-star book reviews! You simply ask your references for a short quote and share that you are looking for short, substantive information—how you solved a problem, helped a company grow, saved \$ or increased productivity or profits.

You may even offer to write the reference FOR them and then simply get their OK. Though this can be a little uncomfortable at first you will end up with some very powerful reference statements that convey exactly the message you want to get across.

References that say: “Jim is a great guy—I would definitely refer him to others—is vague and unimpressive. If you get a reference like that, you might go back to your contact and ask if they wouldn’t mind inserting a little more detail . . . something like this:

“Jim helped us close a \$140 million healthcare construction project that opened the door to a new industry segment for us. In addition, he also happens to be a positive influence and a great person to work with.”

Additional Ways to Help Your References Help You

You will do well to take an active role in developing a powerful reference topic or topics. Simply give potential references two or three things to focus on. Of course those two or three things should be in sync with the kind of position you are focused on. Let’s say in your next position you want to target a Senior VP Operations role. You could coach your references to comment on the following strengths:

- My abilities as a leader—taking a company global.
- My capabilities on the new technology integration task force.
- My abilities to analyze current operations and pioneer long-term growth plans.

Using these easy and powerful tips you will soon have an abundance of highly targeted and compelling references that will have potential employers taking notice!



SAMPLE ENDORSEMENT PAGE

PROFESSIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS & ENDORSEMENTS

“xxxx demonstrates a rare blend of honesty, creativity, and negotiation skills. I was especially amazed by his ability to come into a difficult situation with an ex-customer, demonstrate that past issues had been resolved, and then obtain a purchase order that equaled in volume the largest purchase order issued by this customer.”

Name, Title, Company ■ State & Country

“I am primarily a technologist and have worked with a number of marketing consultants over my career; xxxx is the best person I have ever worked with when it comes to building convincing cost models around technology insertion that customers can get their arms around. He is exceptionally creative, while at the same time relentlessly pursuing important details, and without him we would not have been able to identify several significant opportunities.”

Name, Title, Company ■ State & Country

“xxxx is a high energy, positive, and inquisitive guy who certainly knows his way around the global xxxx industry. For example, he played a particularly important role in xxxx fledgling M&A practice, introducing xxxx as a client—which resulted in a \$650 million sell-side transaction—and attracted key investors during our cash raise for xxxx.

Name, Title, Company ■ State & Country

“I have become extremely impressed with xxxx’s deep understanding of company financing as well as his ability to deal with all projects with discipline and creativity. He also has the gift of quickly establishing valuable relationships within the xxxx industry.”

Name, Title, Company ■ State & Country

“I have met and worked with many marketing executives. I have yet to meet a marketing executive with xxxx's depth. He thinks strategically, acts tactically, and never loses sight of continuously analyzing new data to adjust his tactics. Someday, I hope to reach xxxx’s level.”

Name, Title, Company ■ State & Country

BONUS: HOW TO KEYWORD YOUR RESUME FOR DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES AND POSITIONS

Are you wondering if your resume positions you to land the job of your dreams in a parallel market, new industry, or higher-level position? One area you want to check is your keywords.

Resume keywords are simply the words used to describe your hard and soft skills. Many companies today use keyword scanning software to organize and qualify applicant matches with available positions. Even if a company doesn't use keyword scanning software, it's still extremely important to mirror the keywords listed in a position as much as possible.

You can quickly and easily make certain that your resume attracts the right attention using the following simple steps:

Step #1: Identify Your Favorite Jobs

First, through your favorite job aggregator or niche job board, identify at least two positions that you would qualify as your dream job.

Next, print them out and highlight all of the keywords and phrases that best describe both what you love to do the most and any other strengths and attributes that match your skills. Highlight even those strengths that match functionally, even if the position is in another industry.

Now make sure these keywords are woven throughout your resume, putting special emphasis on the top part of your first page.

Step #2 Use Your Two to Three Best Keywords

You don't necessarily have to redesign your resume for each job you wish to submit your resume to. In fact, if you are finding this to be necessary, you may wish to check your focus.

Many professionally-designed resumes will have approximately three keywords in a bigger, bold font right up at the top. I call these headline keywords. This is a powerful way to immediately target your resume for each particular job you submit your resume to.

Let's say you are submitting for a job that stresses operations, global expansions, and teambuilding. If these are all matching skills for you then you want to mirror these in your headline keywords. With this method you can very simply shift a few main keywords and get maximum attention from your target audience!

Step #3 Consider a Keyword Section

In my resumes I always like to include a keyword section. I call it *Core Competencies* or Skills and Abilities. A good list should include three columns of 4 to 5 bullet points each. In the first column include your strongest competencies, in the middle perhaps soft skills that would include leadership and management abilities, and your third can include technical aptitudes, language skills and/or secondary skills such as leading training programs or creating marketing collateral.

Using these valuable tips gives you a simple easy way to make sure your resume is targeted for the positions you really want!

BONUS: EXECUTIVE RESUME TIPS: FIVE COMMON RESUME MISTAKES

I see it too many times.

Brilliant, forward-thinking executives missing out on fabulous job opportunities . . . just because their resume wasn't working for them like it should!

A resume is no place to cut corners on your job search . . . that's like going on a first date with someone you really like without getting all cleaned up. Yikes!

Here are five common resume mistakes to avoid:

Mistake #1: Too Generalized

If you are an executive you must be able to communicate precisely what you bring to the table.

Here is a quick tip on getting specific: what is the ONE key area where you really shine?

Is it your industry (that you plan to say in) or is it a function or a process? Once you have that written down, next write down your next two greatest strengths.

Are these keywords right at the top of your resume? They should be.

Mistake #2: Too Long

Is your resume more than two pages? Under certain circumstances, a three-page resume is acceptable (and of course a CV can be as long as you like), but generally you are better served to keep your resume no longer than two pages.

Mistake #3: Too Garbled

Word economy is extremely important when it comes to writing your resume. Do you have a long list of bullet points under your job from the 1990s? Was the position you held at that time about four levels below where you are now? If the answer is yes, that is a big red flag.

Perception is everything, and you really want your potential employer to see you as the leader you are now, not the manager you once were.

Mistake #4: Too Plain

Have you looked at a few samples of executive-level resumes? How does yours measure up?

Boxes, arrows, and even small charts and graphs that demonstrate your accomplishments are quick, compelling, and effective strategies that garner positive attention.

Have you ever looked at a credentialed, experienced resume writer's website and seen the testimonials about how Mr. Executive couldn't get an interview until Mrs. Super Resume Writer redesigned his resume?

It works, and it's a wise (and often tax deductible) investment!

Mistake #5: Too Boring

One of the most important things your resume should convey is your accomplishments. They need to be quantified, short, and highly compelling!

This is a tough one for most executives. Even resume writers admit they would be hard pressed to write their own resume!

But you can begin by using a simple template that includes the following:

1. Problem
2. What you did
3. What happened when you did it?

These stories should detail what you are doing when you are at your very best and LOVING your job!

This way you will be honoring your strengths and aptitudes authentically and attracting the right attention!

By avoiding these five mistakes you stand to secure more high quality interviews and reach your career goals more quickly and easily!

CONCLUSION

I hope this e-book has helped you in crafting your resume and helped to improve your overall job search efforts. I was so excited to write this particular book in The Career Artisan Series. I have not seen a “do it yourself” resume e-book that provides an online link to custom resume templates. When I would run across resume books written by my colleagues that were filled with nice looking resumes I would often think: but the jobseekers buying this book will still have to create their document in Word from scratch . . . and that’s no easy task! In the last several years resume writers have become more savvy and sophisticated than ever in their resume designs—and good thing—they indeed do serve to make their clients stand out and get noticed! But if you are a DIY’er—that also raises the bar for you!

This was also the most difficult book I have written in the series to date. I was quite intimidated at the prospect of attempting to not only explain the technical aspects of a great resume but even more the finer marketing points that communicate the true secrets held by a seasoned resume writer. After crafting well over a thousand resumes to date, it becomes more and more clear to me that the perception created by re-writing someone’s resume has an equally positive effect on the job seeker (my client) AND the prospective employer.

My end goal was to give you a step-by-step guide along with custom templates that you could use to create your own resume with confidence as well as giving you some tips for keeping track of your career accomplishments in a way that will serve as a foundation to your continued success for the remainder of your career.

I consider myself very fortunate to have worked with thousands of job seekers as a job search coach and resume writer for over 16 years now. I have been hired by so many wonderful men and women—I have come to know many of their individual situations, including family, career, and other personal goals and job search struggles. Getting to know them makes it clear how similar we all are as humans—the majority of us simply want to take care of our families and be excellent at what we do. Each client “case” becomes very personal for me and inspires me ever onward to best communicate my areas of knowledge in a way helps jobseekers achieve their goals.

If you are in a job search, I would truly encourage you to look at my other e-books available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble—especially on the topic of how to tap the hidden job market. This is truly my specialty as a job search coach, and you will learn how to use your new resume and value proposition letter in a job search so you can land more interviews and offers for the jobs you really want. Thank you for reading *The 21st Century Resume: Guide for the Perplexed* and I truly wish you every success in your career.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Internationally Certified Advanced Resume Writer
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Author, speaker, Internationally Certified Advanced Resume Writer, and Internationally Certified Master Career Director, Mary Elizabeth Bradford is a career-services industry expert and is known as “The Career Artisan.” She has 16 years’ experience providing job search coaching and marketing and branding documents for mid- to senior-level job seekers.



Mary Elizabeth is the author of three other guide books: “Phone Networking Secrets Revealed,” “Secrets of the Unadvertised Job Market . . . Revealed!” and “Interview Follow Up: Guide for the Perplexed.” She is the publisher of the semimonthly ezine, *The Career Insider*. Her guidebooks have been lauded by both clients and colleagues as “powerful,” “comprehensive,” and “highly effective.”

She has designed resumes for more than 1,000 professionals worldwide and completed more than 5,000 hours of “virtual” coaching.

Known as a hidden job market expert, Mary Elizabeth has shown hundreds of professionals at all levels how to get off the job board treadmill and land interviews and offers by tapping into the hidden job market. Her [Job Search Success System](#) is a revolutionary system that teaches job seekers how to set up an easy, turnkey job search that gets results in the hidden job market.

She is a member of the highly esteemed Career Directors International and has served on several CDI committees throughout the years. Mary Elizabeth obtained her certification as an Advanced Resume Writer and Master Career Director through CDI and is one of only a few recipients worldwide to be awarded with CDI’s Master Career Professional Lifetime Achievement Award. She has been published in multiple law and business journals and career-related websites throughout the world including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Businessweek*, *The Wisconsin Law Journal*, *The Boston Business Journal*, *The San Antonio Business Journal*, *The New Mexico Business Journal*, *Netshare* and others.

Mary Elizabeth lives in the beautiful Hill country of Texas with her husband and daughter.