
PREPARING A PROPER RESUME

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Approximately 8,000 resumes a year flow into the offices of Tyler & Company, one of the largest healthcare search firms in the country. Our offices literally overflow with paper from job seekers. Some 45,000 of these resumes remain on file with our firm for future use. From this abundance of experience in reviewing resumes, I offer the following insights for those of you who may be in the process of updating your resume for some future job change.

First, a word of warning!

A resume is merely a facilitation tool; it is a first step, not an end in itself. Some job seekers believe that the preparation of a good resume is the most important part of a job search, but even the most stellar and professional resume does not ensure success. In truth, a good interview is the most important part of the search process. Do not spend so much time on your resume that you neglect preparation for your interviews. The interviews are far more important than the resume.

Think of the preparation of a resume in the same light as sitting for the CPA exam, which one passes by scoring a 75. One receives no particular credit for a higher score. In fact, one's score does not even appear on the certificate. Any score above 75 could be considered wasted effort. Lots of people waste effort trying to put together the perfect resume. Do not lose sight of the fact that the resume is a facilitation tool to get you from point A to point B. Get your resume to a 75 and put the extra time into getting an interview.

Historical Resumes

For your information, there are three types of resumes. These are the historical (or chronological), the functional and the narrative. For the purposes of this article, we'll focus only on the historical resume since the others are of limited use and value.

A historical resume is arranged in reverse chronological order. Using the sample resume as an example, let us examine each of the seven individual items in the historical resume in the order in which they normally appear:

1. Full name and contact information
2. Education
3. Experience: responsibilities and accomplishments
4. Professional affiliations
5. Personal information (optional)
6. Outside interests
7. References

Obviously, your name and address are essential items to include on your resume. Begin each new page with your name in case the pages become separated during review and copying. *Because of the increase in the practice of scanning resumes and use of optical character recognition software, we no longer use underlining.*

If you have a nickname by which you are better known, you may wish to place it in parentheses after your given name. Also, if you have a doctoral degree, professional certifications, or a distinguished fellowship, by all means, place the appropriate initials (for example, CPA, Ph.D., or FACHE) after your name. However, if you have an MBA or B.S., save that information for the education section of your resume.

Full name and contact information

Always place your home address on the resume, unless you are working out of your office in an outplacement situation — a rare occurrence. However, because most contacts with candidates are made over the telephone at their place of business during normal working hours, it is very important for people to be able to reach you during business hours.

With the rise of the Internet, e-mail addresses have become more common. I like to see them on a resume because they connote some capability on the part of the candidate as to computer abilities. Be careful, however, not to use an e-mail address that is “cutesy” such as “HireMe@aol.com.”

Your resume should not include a job objective. Job objectives are usually either so broad as to be meaningless or so narrow as to keep you out of the running for a position that you might like to explore. Leave the job objective off your resume; rather, include it in the cover letter you draft to accompany your resume. Ditto on the “executive summary.”

Education

The next item on the resume, in most cases, is “education.” Someone in senior-level management might place this section at the end of the resume, depending upon the individual’s professional level. Because a historical resume chronicles your life in reverse order, begin with the highest degree earned; do not indicate the dates that school was attended, only the year in which the degree was conferred. If you graduated with honors, include this information in the description of the degree. Omit your grade point average, as it is distracting and unnecessary.

Experience

Now we reach the most important section of the resume — “experience.” Here you describe the jobs that you have held. Two common errors are often made by many candidates in this section: the first of which is failing to describe specific responsibilities and accomplishments. Responsibilities and accomplishments are both important, so you should include them in your description of each job. Responsibilities tell the reader about the scope and breadth of the job. Examples of responsibilities you want to note include the number of full-time employees (FTEs) supervised, the number of departments reporting to you, the total amount of the budget you directed, and the names of committees on which you served. Accomplishments, on the other hand, describe what you did on the job to “make a difference.” Try to offer accomplishments more meaningful than “managing,” “coordinating,” and “orchestrating.” One concrete way to do so is by quantifying your accomplishments.

The second most common mistake is failing to clearly format employment history within a single organization. Indicate the dates of continuous employment with one organization on the left side and note the dates corresponding to each position within the organization immediately after the job description.

To save space and the reviewer’s time, try to abbreviate the responsibilities and accomplishments for earlier positions. The further you go back in time, the more important it is to condense your responsibilities and accomplishments.

Professional Affiliations

The next section, “professional affiliations,” rounds out your resume’s description of you. Professional affiliations demonstrate your active involvement in the healthcare profession. Do not, however, overload this section. An abundance of professional affiliations may cause the reader to conclude that the candidate spends more time attending meetings and dealing with outside entities than he or she does at work.

Personal Information

Your resume can contain some personal information, if it is brief. If you are married, you might want to go ahead and mention that fact, if you believe it will help convey a sense of stability. If you have children, give the number, but not their names, as this is unnecessary clutter.

Outside Interests

As a complement to your education, work experience, and professional affiliations, the next section, “outside interests,” gives the reviewer additional information about you. I recommend listing active sports as outside interests. Healthcare professionals commonly golf, fish or play tennis recreationally. By listing these hobbies, you provide an opportunity for “breaking the ice” during an interview. You should be careful if your outside interests might be considered outside the norm. You can’t predict how a reviewer will react to them; an example might be “kite flying”.

References

The final section, "references," requires little space on your resume. By simply stating on your resume, "References available upon request," you indicate that you are prepared to provide them. Do not provide your references unless asked.

Some tips that should be mentioned.

1. We no longer use colored paper for resumes. The advent of scanning systems at employers has caused the demise of colored paper which is harder to scan.
2. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) systems, which turn a printed resume into a searchable computer text file, have also influenced how we produce resumes. Candidates must now be cognizant to get searchable words and phrases into their resumes so that the text search engines will flag resumes as ones needing human review. Because OCR systems have difficulty converting faxed resumes, the desirability of faxing a resume is decreasing.
3. The use of the Internet for transmission of resumes is growing. In the space of one year, resumes received electronically at Tyler & Company went from 5% to 20%; currently 75% of resumes come to us by e-mail. Candidates must now be computer literate enough to respond electronically to a request for resume.
4. In spite of my personal dislike for Microsoft, Microsoft Word has become the defacto standard word processing software for resume preparation because of its compatibility with so many other programs.
5. The use of the Internet as a recruiting and job-seeking tool has grown such that some candidates for technical or IT jobs rarely produce hard copies of their resumes. This trend will eventually spill over into healthcare.
6. Many of the job matching internet operations (Futurestep, for example), through their registration process, have eliminated the need for a resume. You basically construct a computer resume through the questions you are asked during the registration process.
7. While writing about resume preparation, I would be remiss in not directing you to our own Web site, **www.tylerandco.com**, where numerous articles on resume preparation are available, including sample cover letters and reference lists. The most popular feature is a list of the searches that we are currently conducting.

J. Larry Tyler, FACHE, FAAHC, is President of Tyler & Company, a retained search firm specializing in healthcare. With offices in Atlanta, Philadelphia, Charlotte and Austin, the firm is national in scope and one of the largest search firms in the country. Mr. Tyler is the author of [Tyler's Guide: The Healthcare Executive's Job Search](#), published by Health Administration Press and now in its third edition. Mr. Tyler has been in the executive search business for 30 years.