



What your resume might be saying *about you...*

Gateway's People and Performance team undertakes an initial screening of resumes when they are received for all advertised positions, therefore over the years we have seen a significant number of resumes. We feel that we are well placed to highlight some of the ways in which your resume might be letting you down.

It often feels that people think a resume is unimportant; as if it is just a formality and an unavoidable way of conveying your experience. It's not. Your resume is your calling card and it is representing you. We are using it to judge not only your experience but your professionalism and therefore how you are likely to represent us if we employed you.

Frankly, there is nothing more frustrating than receiving the resume of a candidate who has great experience but who has just documented it so badly that you know it will not be well-received by the recruiting manager.

So here are some things we would suggest that you take into account for your resume:

Formatting

At first glance is your resume neat, polished, and professionally laid out?

We see too many resumes that are haphazardly formatted. It appears that new sections have just been tacked on each time a new job is added.

Check that the formatting is consistent throughout the document. Make sure you take into account:

- Font style and size
- The style used for major and minor headings
- Spacing between paragraphs and sections
- Bullet point styles
- The depth of indented paragraphs or lists
- Consistent punctuation for the whole list when using bullet points
- Formatting of tables, including borders and shading
- That you have checked your spelling carefully

It is formatting that strikes us first when reviewing a resume but once we're past that the next thing is content.

Content

Have you characterised your past experience yourself?

All too often we see resumes that come across as if the person has copied the role requirements from a PD or from their annual objectives. (Having drafted PDs and objectives so often, we are very well placed to recognise this type of content!) We want you to bring your experience to life for us.

We want to glance through your resume and clearly understand who you have worked for and what you have done, so that we can assess how that might benefit us for our role.

Here are some factors to take into account:

- Will we know your past employers? If not, then give one or two lines about them, such as industry, size and areas of operation.
- If you have moved between positions for the same employer, try to make that progression clear for us. A table with a career summary at the front of your resume may help to make your working history easier to follow. Always remember to list from most recent first.

- Sequence your responsibilities for each position held in a logical fashion according to either importance or the time commitment. We are more likely to assume that the items at the top of the list will be your most significant responsibilities, so make sure they are.
- Allocate space in your resume proportionately, according to the significance and scope of the role. Allocating a few lines to a three-month temporary role and the same to a 10-year permanent role can have the effect of diminishing the impact of the 10-year role (unless that role was at the very beginning of your career).
- Provide meaningful dates! Only stating the year in which you started and finished a role does not give a true picture of your experience. The month and year should always be provided.
- Fill in the blanks for us! If you have a large time gap between roles, it is best to put in a line explaining what you did during this period.
- Try to keep the same perspective throughout. For example, avoid switching from one tense to another when listing responsibilities.
- Each time you add a new position to your resume, you should cull some detail from your older roles. In many instances the responsibilities of your earliest positions will no longer be relevant to your current circumstances and you can cut the detail back to the employer, position held and dates. If you have used a career summary, you may not even need to refer to your earliest roles in the body of your resume.

The final point on content is whether to include a list of strengths and/or achievements. The jury is out on this point... You won't lose any points for leaving them out but you can lose points for putting them in. They can interfere with the flow and readability of your resume or make it too lengthy. It is also frustrating to read lists of strengths and capabilities and then find that there is insufficient detail about past positions to judge where those skills may have been gained.

Style

Checked all that? Now let's look at style or more to the point, lack of style!

Why do so many resumes look like they were prepared with the technologies of last century? Or worse, the one before!

You are allowed to show some personality in your resume. As long as the overall effect is still polished and professional, it might help you to stand out a little.

If you want to add an extra element, take a few minutes to search resume formats. Look at the templates and see if any particular features appeal to you, such as a font or heading style that jump out at you. In this area, a little goes a long way, so just don't overdo it.

Accuracy

One final point to consider, which is rather serious, is the accuracy of the detail provided in your resume.

Like Gateway, many companies undertake employment history verification. The source document they will use is the resume you provide. As part of the background checks for new hires, an outsourced provider would contact your previous employers. They will work through your resume and confirm dates of employment, position titles, time spent in different positions and the title of direct managers.

You must not treat your resume like a real estate marketing campaign, where embellishment and exaggeration are the norm! If it is found that you have misled your prospective employer, it may result in you missing out on the opportunity after both parties have invested considerable time in the recruitment process. You have been warned!

We hope this guide has been of use to you and that perhaps it might be us reading your very polished and professional resume. We look forward to it!

