

## Write a Winning Employment History

Hiring managers have love-hate relationships with resumes. They need resumes to find candidates to fill job openings, but they often have to wade through piles of poorly written work histories. If you give a hiring manager the information needed to make a quick decision about your credentials, you will have an edge over other applicants.

Here are nine ways you can jazz up your experience section to capture the attention of hiring managers:

### **1. Ditch the Job Description.**

One of the most common mistakes is to write experience sections that read like job descriptions. Some job seekers go so far as to copy job descriptions word for word. The result is a boring recap of job duties with no indication of actual job performance.

### **2. Prove Your Value.**

Hiring managers scan your resume looking for clues about what type of worker you are. If you show that you consistently produced positive results for previous employers, you will be seen as a desirable candidate. The key is to emphasize your accomplishments and provide proof of your potential value.

### **3. Quantify Results.**

Which statement has more impact?

Significantly increased revenues and grew client base between 1997 and 2000.

Increased revenues from \$250,000 in 1997 to \$1.5 million in 2000 and tripled client base from 2,500 to 7,000.

In both cases, the candidate is trying to convey he increased revenues and expanded the client base, but statement B measures how well he achieved this growth. Wherever possible, include measurable results of your work.

Note that not everyone can release company performance figures. If presenting this information is a breach of confidentiality, find another way to present your accomplishments. For example, use percentages rather than actual dollar figures.

#### **4. Are You Up to PAR?**

PAR stands for Problem Action Results and is a good starting point for thinking about your accomplishments. What types of challenges did you face? What actions did you take to overcome the problems? What was the result of your efforts, and how did your performance benefit the company? Write down a list of your PAR accomplishments and incorporate the most impressive ones into your resume.

#### **5. Lead with Your Work's Outcomes.**

An effective strategy is to write the result of your work before listing the problem and action. This allows you to lead with the most compelling aspect of your accomplishment.

For example: Reversed an annual \$2 million decline in market share by streamlining the benchmark process and building a top-flight sales team.

#### **6. Make It Readable.**

Some resumes use bullets to outline work histories, but this tends to blur duties and accomplishments, which dilutes the impact of achievements. Other resumes use a narrative style to describe work history, which tends to be cumbersome to read, especially for hiring managers who are quickly scanning resumes to extract key information.

Instead, use a combination of paragraphs and bullets. For each employer, provide a brief paragraph that details the scope of your responsibilities. Then create a bulleted list of your top contributions. The bullets draw attention to your accomplishments, while giving the eye a place to rest. Preface accomplishments with a heading such as Key Accomplishments or Significant Contributions.

#### **7. Target Your Experience to Your Goal.**

Resumes are marketing tools. Your employment history should effectively market you for your current job objective. Focus on accomplishments that

relate to your goal and remove job duties and accomplishments that don't support your objective.

### **8. Use Power Words.**

The quality of the writing makes or breaks your chances for an interview, so select your words carefully. Avoid dull or stale phrases such as "responsible for" and "duties include." Review our list of [Action Phrases and Power Verbs](#) for inspiration.

### **9. Be Honest.**

Studies indicate that job seekers often lie about their work experiences on their resumes. But with honest and well-written employment histories, even job seekers with less-than-perfect backgrounds will secure interviews. The best strategy for your resume is to always be truthful about your background.