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Creating a Resume

Writing a resume is sometimes an arduous task. It can be one of those projects that makes you want to close your eyes to shield yourself from the sting. And you should know better, right? After all, you have hired so many people, led so many recruiting efforts and seen billions of resumes. Why are you finding it tough to write your own? Because it's hard!

Identifying your accomplishments while working in a job that never ceases to demand more from you can be wrenching. Figuring out your skills and expertise takes time and energy, something you may feel drained of at the end of the day.

How can you work around all those roadblocks? One strategy is to break the resume writing project into manageable tasks, just like you would a project at work.

1. Look at job ads that interest you. Pull ads that are robust with descriptions and requirements. These ads are going to be great springboards for creating your resume content and developing a focus for your search.
2. Get your hands on your own job description. There isn't one? Write one! Approach it from the viewpoint of having to recruit someone to replace you. Create an ad that includes the skills, experience and accomplishments required to be successful. Also, think about the management style that is most effective in your position. Make this job ad as detailed and on point as possible. You will be using it to create bullet points for your resume.
3. Make a list of the places you have worked, your community service associations and your professional affiliations. Include titles and years in each position, along with the roles you have taken on and the number of years involved in each organization. Make sure to include your membership with the Association of Legal Administrators!
4. Now, think about what your boss and co-workers would say about you. Which projects would they remember most? Which firm initiatives have you handled especially well? What crisis did you manage with ease? What fires have you put out?
5. Pinpoint accomplishments that make you proud. Your accomplishments might relate to money saved, events planned, creating new recruiting systems, finishing a project ahead of schedule, handling implementation of new technologies or managing a particularly difficult situation.
6. Without worrying about length or precise wording, begin writing bullet points representing each of the ideas identified in steps one to five.
7. Group bullets according to measurable accomplishments and functional areas of expertise. Your resume may have a Profile section of general skills and experience followed by Accomplishments and functional areas of expertise such as Human Resources, Client Relations, Operations, Marketing, Billing and Records Management. If you do not have at least three points under

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a category, merge that category with another. For example, you can merge Records Management and Billing.

8. Use the C = A + B formula to create your bullet points and accomplishments, where C is the accomplishment and A and B is how you got there. Example: Increased staff retention 30% by instituting clear performance expectations and competitive salaries.
9. Go back and cull the information for readability, length and importance; reading the bullets out loud will help you complete this task. Continue until bullet points are two lines or less, but if longer, consider a second bullet or a sub-bullet.
10. Set up your layout. Use a fictitious name at the top then ask yourself, "Would I interview this person?" If you answer yes, then, great! Mission accomplished.

To give yourself one more skill to include on your resume, set deadlines for each of the above steps and stick to them. Once you are finished you can go back and add Effective Project Manager to your Profile section!

To see resume samples used in the February 23 Education Session go to www.citycareerservices.com/ALA.html.

Writing a Cover Letter

Creating unique content for cover letters can be difficult, especially if you spend a great deal of time working hard on your resume. Although writing a

distinctive letter for individual ads can sometimes seem unrealistic, the idea is to give the potential employer the impression that you are the answer to all of their needs. Follow these basic steps to create unique cover letters:

1. Use the same header on your cover letter as on your resume, to give your documents a professional and cohesive image.
2. Personalize letters; find out the hiring person's name if you can, and always use the "RE" line to note the position for which you are applying.
3. Your opening paragraph can be assertive: "A successful Operations Manager is I am that person for your firm." Or it can be standard: "The ad on monster.com for an Operations Manager caught my eye..." It can even be a referral: "Jane Goodall of Glassworks suggested I contact you about the open Operations Manager position..."
4. The body of your cover letter should highlight two or three points about your skills and experience that make you ideal for the position. You can write a few general points that will be valuable to a number of employers, but also look at ads individually to create highlights around specific needs. Demonstrating knowledge of the company and how you fit with their mission and goals is also a good idea.
5. Remember, you are not merely repeating the information on your resume; the cover letter is your chance to talk about something different or additional that did not quite make the resume.

6. In your closing, ask for the interview: "I welcome the opportunity to speak with you in person about this exciting opportunity. I can be reached at ... to arrange an interview."
7. When sending your cover letter via e-mail, use a different font for your signature, e.g., Kimberly Schneiderman, setting it off from the rest of the letter.

To view sample content for your cover letter, see the example used at the February 23 Education Session at www.citycareerservices.com/ALA.html. ■

Teleseminars Teleseminars

ALA's Teleseminars give members, lawyers and their staffs the opportunity to gain knowledge and insight into a variety of law office management and personal development topics. The Teleseminars, presented live by subject-matter experts, allow participants to sit in their own offices, conference rooms or even their own homes as they listen by phone and view via the Internet.

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