

When It Comes to Your Resume, Start With a Steady Foundation

By: Alexandria Vattimo, Career Services Advisor

After reviewing so many resumes over the years, I have noticed there is no one universal mistake people make. However, when writing your resume, you should keep in mind that it is a living document and, therefore, will never be finished. Knowing this should offer you a sigh of relief and allow you to welcome the challenge of ensuring that your resume is suitable for each position you apply to. To make sure that you're putting your best resume forward every time, it's a good idea to start with the formatting.

Format & Context

When I first receive a resume, I examine the overall format. What is the font size and style? How is the layout? Are the headings appropriate for the context? All these factors contribute to the resume's quality, especially in today's job market when we must continuously tailor our resumes to each job.

When it comes to creating your resume, I stress to my clients the importance of format over context initially. **A solid resume is like a house, if the foundation is steady and appealing to the eye, whatever furniture and décor go in can come second.** It works the same way with a strong format for your resume. Your format is your foundation. Looking at your content, do you have a section summarizing your skills in bullet points that are easy to read? How many years back does your Professional Experience go? Are transferable skills more important to highlight for a job you *can* do but have not necessarily done yet? These are all questions you should be asking yourself as you develop your resume. If your answers are no, too long to fit on one page, and, maybe, I can offer a suggestion: Why not add a section with a heading of "Highlights of Accomplishments"? This will give you the space to showcase your most important skills and achievements to date.

Finishing Touches

Upon organizing your resume headings, you can then go back and decide what "furniture," i.e., context, best fits your audience. This is where tailoring and keeping the Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) in mind comes into play. Look at what the employer is asking for; look at the qualifications listed on the job posting. If they want someone who has substantial knowledge in Microsoft Office Suite, and that is a skill you are confident in, make sure it is on your resume!

When you finish an initial review of your resume, it's a good idea to make a bulleted checklist including things you noticed that you should go back and take a closer look at. For example, with Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) being so popular now, it's a good

idea to make sure your resume is ATS friendly. Here are some sites that can help you with that: www.cvscan.uk, www.jobscan.co, www.skillsyncer.com.

For those of you writing a resume for the first time, I suggest you stick to the basics and get your format in place. You can also check out RochesterWorks E-learning for helpful resume writing tips at <https://elearning.rochesterworks.org/> To have your resume reviewed by our friendly and knowledgeable staff, please send it to resumes@rochesterworks.org

In Conclusion

I enjoy reviewing resumes because I love writing. I have always had a passion for writing and reading, and it is something that has come naturally to me. I also love helping people and easing their stress around their job search. I think all of us at RochesterWorks share this mindset, and if writing a resume is something you are struggling with, we can surely help you!