Design Document: Resume Basics

Class Description

Learn how to create a basic functional or chronological resume and format the resume to best sell your skills and experience to potential employers in this class.

**Curriculum Track**

Job & Career

**Audience**

Adults

**Course Length**

90 minutes

**Training Method**

Lecture-Demo

**Purpose**

To introduce sections and key components of a resume in preparation for class two: Customizing Your Resume Part 1

Equipment Requirements

Projector and projection screen; computers with internet access for instructor and each participant; laser pointer (recommended)

Software Requirements

Microsoft Word, Windows 7

Material Requirements

Pens or pencils, activity sheets, handouts, participant surveys

**Learning Objectives**

At the end of the session, learners will be able to:

* Identify the primary sections of a resume
* Describe the differences between chronological and functional resumes
* Define common style elements in a resume
* Identify the differences between an objective and a profile statement

**Assessment Technique(s)**

Successful completion of class activities

Content Outline

**Agenda (2 mins.)**

* Outline the following topics that will be covered in the class:
  + Types of Resumes
  + Format & Language
  + Heading
  + Objective vs. Profile
  + Skills
  + Education
  + Work Experience
  + Additional Sections

**Topics, Talking Points, and Activities (85 mins.)**

* Types of Resumes
  + Explain to participants that there are two common types of resumes: Chronological and Functional
  + Share the following elements about each one as you show the presentation slides:
    - Chronological
      * Most common type
      * Stresses specific employment within a specific field
      * Highlights promotions
      * Usually 1-2 pages in length (though Executive resumes may be longer)
      * Recommended for use by those with solid work experience who wish to show career progression over time
    - Functional
      * Stresses transferable skills and volunteer experience
      * Minimizes gaps in employment history
      * Usually 1 page in length
      * Recommended for those with limited work experience or significant gaps in employment history (such as recent graduates, former stay-at-home parents, or those with significant periods of unemployment)

**ACTIVITY**: Have participants complete **Activity #1** on the *Activity Sheet*

* Format & Language
* Ask the class how long they think a hiring manager looks at a resume before deciding if he or she wants to see more or tosses it out; entertain answers, and then share that it’s really only about 5-10 seconds
* Follow up by explaining that this is why the visual presentation of a resume is so important
* Next, move into an explanation of the following common resume formatting elements, providing examples, where appropriate:
  + Overall readability
    - Readability is determined by flow, writing clarity, sentence structure, and overall look of the resume (as determined by other elements)
  + Fonts
    - Fonts should be large enough for the average reader to see (10-12 point) and in a style that is easy to read and widely available on most computers (such as Arial or Times New Roman)
    - The exception is the header, which should have a more stylized, larger font, to call attention to your information
  + Grammar and spelling
    - Proper grammar and spelling are ESSENTIAL to good resumes as awkward sentence structure, unclear explanations, and misspelled words tend to indicate a carelessness that future employers feel may transfer into an applicant’s work
    - Avoid relying solely on MS Word’s tools; ask a strong writer to review it and provide feedback
  + Length
    - Resumes—in most cases—should be 1-2 pages long (1 sheet of paper, one-sided or two-sided)
    - Common exceptions are Executive Resumes (3-4 pages long for high-level positions), Curriculum Vitae (used in Academia; can be many pages and include publications, speaking engagements, etc.), and Portfolios (may begin with a 1-2 page resume and include samples of work such as drawings, screen captures, renderings, etc.)
  + Style
    - Style refers to the way your resume looks and encompasses section headings, fonts, bolded, italicized, and underlined text, layout and the overall visual presentation of your information
  + Margins and spacing
    - It is important that resumes have ample white space so the reader does not become overwhelmed with text when looking at the document
    - Margins should be a MINIMUM of ½” all around up to a maximum of 1”
    - Spacing can be single or double-spaced depending on the placement of the text within a section or the overall document
  + Paper/electronic format
    - Resumes should be printed on professional paper instead of standard printer paper; nothing too fancy, but something with a heavier weight and nice texture
    - If submitting a resume electronically instead, create a PDF of your Word document whenever possible to preserve the formatting
* Next, discuss that language has as much of an impact on the resume as the formatting does
* Explain that a resume is supposed to be a teaser, or a tool that highlights your skills and abilities in a way that makes employers want to bring you in to learn more
* Share that the writing style used on a resume should reflect this as you point out the following considerations:
  + This is not the stage at which you need to impress reviewers with flowery narratives and prose; keep it short, simple, specific, and heavy on the action words
  + Write in 3rd person as that is what is used in the business world for reports, presentations, etc.
  + Minimize abbreviations and jargon that are not commonly used and known within the industry to which you are applying for a job
* Show the slide containing the Eye Test and point out the differences in how the resume looks to participants

**ACTIVITY**: Have participants complete **Activity #2** on the *Activity Sheet*

* Heading
* Explain that the heading is important because it makes the first impression for a resume and contains an applicant’s contact information
* Share that the header should contain the following pieces of information, and then show the example slide:
  + **Name** (proper name, as it appears on government issued identification)
  + **Phone** (best contact number)
  + **Email** (professional address with a well-known provider)
  + **Electronic Profile or Portfolio**,if applicable (LinkedIn, personal website, etc.)

**ACTIVITY**: Have participants complete **Activity #3** on the *Activity Sheet*

* Objective vs. Profile Statements
  + Explain that resumes can include either an objective or a profile depending on the resume type and the depth of the applicant’s experience
  + Discuss each one as you move through the corresponding slides
    - Objective: a brief statement that defines the type of employment sought and career goals
    - Explain that it fits best with a functional resume and answers the question, “What do I want from you?”
    - Share that an objective MUST include the following:
      * The position title and the job or field
      * Share that it also CAN include the following:
      * Position level and name of the company to which the applicant is applying
      * Walk through the examples on the slide
    - Next, explain that the profile differs from the objective in that its aim is to highlight an applicant’s transferable skills and abilities in a few short sentences
      * Explain that it fits best with a chronological resume and answers the question, “What can I do for you?”
      * Walk through the examples on the slide

**ACTIVITY**: Have participants complete **Activity #4** on the *Activity Sheet*

* Skills
  + Explain that while every applicant likely possesses HUNDREDS of skills that could be listed on a resume, only those that match what is being requested in job postings or sought in the industry within which the applicant is seeking employment should be included
  + Share that depending on the type of resume an applicant chooses to create, skills can be included in various sections:
    - Functional Resume: Skills section, Experience section
    - Chronological Resume: Profile section, Work Experience section
  + Point out that it is ALWAYS a good idea to highlight the following skills in some fashion as they are sought after by every employer:
    - Communication
    - Teamwork
    - Leadership
    - Technical proficiencies
  + Show the sample job posting and walk through how it incorporated key skills from the posting into the Work Experience summary for a similar job

**ACTIVITY**: Have participants complete **Activity #5** on the *Activity Sheet*

* Education
  + Share that all higher education degrees can be included on a resume and stress that all Bachelor-level degrees and above SHOULD be included
  + Share that honors also may be included, if desired (A typical scale = Magna [4.0], Summa [3.8-3.9], or Cum [3.5-3.7] Laude, though the scale may vary by institution)
  + Explain that opinions vary on whether or not to include high school-level education as well as on whether or not to include a high school graduation date (some feel that including a date that indicates an applicant’s age may prejudice potential employers)
    - Tell participants that it is their call as to whether or not they include it, but share that if they have no post-secondary education, they should include their high school education in its place (with or without the graduation year, according to their preference)
  + Share that applicants definitely should include an applicable professional certifications, licenses, or training courses regardless of education level achieved
  + Show the sample Education & Credentials section in the presentation

**ACTIVITY**: Have participants complete **Activity #6** on the *Activity Sheet*

* Work Experience
  + Explain that the Work Experience section (or Experience section, on the Functional Resume) is key to helping employers determine things like size and scope of responsibility, how frequently the applicant changes jobs, and key contributions to the organization in addition to transferable skills
  + Review the major components of the Work Experience section as you walk through the slide:
    - Company name and location (town and state)
    - Job title
    - Dates employed (years only, though dates may be omitted entirely on a Functional Resume)
    - Roles and responsibilities
      * 1-4 sentences or bullet points using action words that highlight transferable skills and abilities
    - Key accomplishments
      * 3-4 major projects, awards, promotions, or activities that show your potential
  + Show the example Work Experience summary from a Chronological Resume and discuss how it encompasses the above components

**ACTIVITY**: Have participants complete **Activity #7** on the *Activity Sheet*

* Additional Sections
  + Share that a resume may also include other sections depending on the applicant’s preference, the type of position for which he or she is applying, or standards within a specific industry
  + Walk through the following optional sections on the presentation slide:
    - Volunteer work: May be helpful when applying for jobs with non-profits or jobs that are community-driven
    - Military experience: May give you an edge on other applicants if the company is actively trying to recruit veterans
    - Software applications: If a position has a robust technology element or involves training others)
    - Groups and organizations (if a position involves a lot of outside contact with groups and organizations or has specific organizations it tends to work with)
    - Internships or externships (if an applicant lacks professional experience but has transferable experience with unpaid work)
    - Presentations, publications, or workshops (if they company expects employees to deliver professional development activities to peers)

**Wrap Up/Closing (3 mins.)**

* Highlight the upcoming technology classes and share the types of topics that will be covered
* Ask if there are questions and answer any that were “parked” during the session
* Thank participants for coming and ask them to complete the class survey before leaving