

Updating Your Resume

Don't Just Add On – Overhaul!

Although professional wisdom says we should always have an up-to-date resume (you never know when that golden opportunity will come along) most of us wait until we WANT or NEED a new job to update the resume document. And then the approach is usually to just tack on experience from our most recent position and let it go at that. After all, the information from previous positions *is what it is* and got us here – so why do we need to change it, right? Wrong! *That's a little like painting your house without first prepping the walls. Something unwanted or needed is bound to show through.*

In today's competitive job market your resume needs to be focused, concise and compelling. It needs to showcase your achievements relative to your target position, and demonstrate to the reader that YOU are the person they are looking for. Of course, this means some work on your part. Adding on just won't do. You need to overhaul!

"But how?" you ask. Follow this 7-step process to remodel your resume and improve its relevance, power and results.

1. **Keep track of your achievements.** Create an online or paper folder where you store the following:
 - a. An ongoing list of accomplishments, new skills developed, knowledge gained, classes taken/training completed, certifications achieved, relationships built
 - b. Performance reviews
 - c. Kudos and thank you emails
 - d. Documents, articles and other "portfolio" items you've developed

Having these items up-to-date and in one place will accelerate your resume updating process.

2. **Define and research your target position/company.** Company websites and their job postings are an excellent start. Also, check out similar position descriptions on the various job boards, such as www.indeed.com and www.simplyhired.com. You can find additional company information at www.hoovers.com, www.vault.com and www.zoominfo.com.
3. **List target requirements.** Make a list of the key skill, experience and competency requirements listed in your target position description. Indicate next to each item whether you have that skill, experience or competency. Cross-reference each item to the corresponding experience/achievement on your current resume. For each skill/experience/competency that you don't have, what are you doing about getting it? Is there a non-work situation – a community or professional organization, perhaps – where you've used the skill?

Now here's the fun part.

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4. **Map requirements to examples.** For each skill/experience/competency that you indicate you have, write down a specific example of how you've demonstrated that skill/experience/competency. It's one thing to "say" on your resume that you have it. It's another – quite powerful – thing to "show" that you have it through a specific example. And, as a bonus, this will prepare you for the inevitable behavioral interview questions that request specific examples.
5. **Reprioritize based on target.** Go through your resume, starting with the earliest job listed (by the way, in most cases your resume should go just 10 to 15 years back) and re-order the bullets within the job so that the ones related to the target position skills/experience/competencies are first in the list. Add your most recent position and achievements, with laser focus on your target. Also, move the really juicy items (relative to your target) into the summary section.
6. **Cull out the clutter.** Are there items on your resume that have no relevance to your target position? Delete. Are there skills that you would rather not use again (even if you're good at them)? Delete. Again, it's about focusing on your target and making sure that everything on your resume says, "I can succeed at this job."
7. **Spell check. Review. Self-edit. Review again.** Have someone else review it and then review it again. One spelling error, typo or formatting snafu could send your resume directly to a recruiter's recycle bin.

Your resume is your personal marketing tool. It is your ticket to opportunity. It deserves the same routine maintenance you give your car, your home, your hair (!) and other important possessions.

"It's better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one, than to have an opportunity and not be prepared." – Whitney M. Young, Jr.

About the author: *Leslie Flowers, principal of WordShapers, is a writer and career coach who works with job seekers in a variety of professions, career levels and industries to develop attractive, focused and compelling personal marketing tools. She also uses PeopleThink's **The Get Real Guide to Your Career™** to help job seekers create and implement a focused, strategic and actionable plan to find the work they want.*
