

# Does your Resume have “Curb Appeal?”

By L.A. Grainger



Everyone knows the resume is the best tool a job seeker has to market their skills, but did you know that the average hiring manager or recruiter spends less than 20 seconds reviewing each resume? In today's competitive market, employers can receive hundreds of resumes for a single job posting, making it essential for them to quickly turn that stack into a few qualified candidates. Your resume has less than 20 seconds to WOW a potential employer!

So how can your resume attract and hold the attention of a hiring manager for more than 20 seconds? **Curb Appeal.** Realtors use “curb appeal” to describe the level of visual appeal the outside of a home has to a potential buyer. This approach can help job seekers also. Adding “curb appeal” to the general appearance and content of your resume could mean the difference in landing a phone-screen or face-to-face interview, or being tossed aside with only a moment's glance. Outshine the competition by making a few modifications.

## 1. Format

The format of your resume should be clear and concise. Make sure your resume is created in an industry-standard word processing application, such as MS Word. An eye catching font, like Arial, at a 10 or 12 pitch size displays well. Keep paragraphs single-spaced and left justified for a nice look. Margins should be set to 1” all around; which is the default in MS Word. Resumes between one and three pages are generally acceptable, but if your resume exceeds three pages, you should consider editing paragraphs to remove unnecessary text, or use bullet points to display experience. Saying more with fewer words is always best practice. Tip: use font styles, such as **bold**, *italic*, or font sizing to bring attention to certain information, such as Job Titles, degrees, certifications, and major accomplishments. Remember you have 20 seconds, make every word count.

## 2. Chronological or Functional?

The two most popular resume types are Chronological and Functional. *Chronological* resumes display functional work EXPERIENCE by date of employment; beginning with most recent. Tip: this format is most preferred by employers.

*Functional* resumes emphasize overall expertise, but are not categorized by a particular employer or by employment dates. This type of resume is generally used if the job-seeker has worked non-related jobs or has a noticeable gap in employment. If you decide to use a functional resume, be prepared to answer any questions regarding “time in positions” with potential employers.

## 3. Organize Resume

Separate your resume into sections to highlight your qualifications: INTRODUCTION, SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, EDUCATION, and ACCOMPLISHMENTS. This is the general order; however, you can modify to promote your qualifications. For example: if you are applying for a Project Manager position and you have completed your PMP Certification, move the EDUCATION section below the INTRODUCTION section. Here are content recommendations for each section:

- INTRODUCTION – This is the most powerful section. Hiring managers are most likely to read this section thoroughly, and compelled to review individual job EXPERIENCE if they like what they read. Keep this section down to a five or six sentence paragraph, to include the number of year's experience you have in the job field, and a summary of qualifications that pertain only to the job you are applying for. Tip: not sure how to get started? Use a recent Job Description or Performance Evaluation to extract useful industry terms and written job responsibilities. Include quantitative and performance information. If you are Sales Manager who can successfully meet a quarterly quota of \$250k in the software industry, and also possess a functional expertise of the product you sell, say so. Employers want a clear picture of your total value; your ability, your performance results, and what sets you apart from your peers. Keep content professional and

to the point. Use key words that will emphasize your strengths, such as: *advocated, demonstrated, facilitated, implemented, improved, launched, managed, maximized, negotiated, orchestrated, organized, prioritized, streamlined, strategized, supervised, tailored.*

- **SKILLS** – This section is reserved for listing all relevant desktop applications or third-party programs, and technical or non-technical equipment that you are proficient in and is also relevant to your chosen career. Tip: if you haven't used a particular application, technology or equipment in over 5 years, or if technology is out-dated, leave it off your resume.
- **EXPERIENCE** – Summarize each position you've held in your career, starting with most recent employment and so on. Provide company name, time in position, job title, and a one or two paragraph summary or bullet points of your functional role and responsibilities, and highlighted accomplishments. Do include a short description of the company and what services they provide.

Need more ideas on writing your job summary? Websites like SimplyHired.com or Salary.com provide examples specific to job functions. You can also use your favorite search engine, such as Google, to search on keywords like "Job Title," "City, State," and "Job Description." To refine search engine results, try using a Boolean search string in the search field. Below is an example:

**"Product Manager" AND "Atlanta" AND "Job Description"**

- **EDUCATION** – In this section you will list out all in-progress or completed college degrees, certifications, and/or professional coursework or classes. Tip: list only education and classes that pertain to, or would compliment, your career choice. Only list High School education if you are just entering the job market.
- **ACCOMPLISHMENTS** – This section can be used to list items that endorse your career success, such as URL links to podcasts or websites (such as LinkedIn) that you have direct association with, industry or employer awards received, published articles or speaking engagements, or patents.

There is mixed opinion on whether a resume should contain REFERENCES or OBJECTIVE sections. Employers will ask for references when needed, no need to include with resume upfront. In regards to OBJECTIVES, job seekers have routinely used this section to summarize their short and long term career goals. However, employers who feel the candidate's objectives are not in alignment with the career path of the job opportunity may overly scrutinize the candidate; best to leave off the resume and set aside for the face-to-face interview.

#### **4. Integrity Check**

If you can't prove it, leave it off your resume. In the SKILLS section, list only applications and equipment that you have a working proficiency in. Many employers include proficiency testing as part of their pre-employment process. Tip: have REFERENCES readily available to present to an employer during a face-to-face interview. This will allow them to contact prior employer to verify your experience and proficiency levels.

#### **5. Interview Ready - Portfolio**

Think a Portfolio is just for actors and models? Think again! A Portfolio can be a valuable asset to set you apart from your peers during a face-to-face interview. Are your Excel spreadsheets or Illustrator graphic designs the rave of your peers and managers? Are your Visio Flowcharts or Project Plans in MS Project well written? Print a sample and place them into a clear page protector, and inside a 3-ring notebook. Organize your notebook into a presentation ready Portfolio by placing a copy of your resume and references in the front, samples of work in the center, and previous performance evaluations and copies of awards or certificates in the back. Be ready to offer any potential employer the opportunity to thumb through your portfolio before ending your interview.

Be **confident**, be **on-time**,  
and be **prepared** when opportunity knocks!

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