

# HOW TO WRITE A KILLER RESUME

---

*Experts say that you only have 5 seconds to grab the attention of a potential employer by the look of your resume. Below are some tips on how to get the interview you want!*

## **TIP #1 – USE TITLES OF HEADINGS THAT MATCH THE JOB YOU WANT**

With employers receiving hundreds of resumes, you must make sure that your resume hooks an employer's attention within a 5-second glance. A great way to do this is to use job titles and skill headings that relate to and match the job you want. For example, compare the headings Roger used in his "before" resume to the headings he used in his "after" resume.

### ***Before Resume:***

- Accounting/Recordkeeping
- Administrative
- Computer Skills

### ***After Resume:***

- Management of A/R and A/P Accounts
- Computerized Accounting Applications Departmental
- Administration/Recordkeeping

Which set of headings do you think are the strongest for an *Accounts Payable/Receivable Manager* position?

Even though Roger's title was Accounting Assistant, he actually managed over 1,000 A/R and A/P accounts. Using skill headings that market the true nature of Roger's job duties will generate him more interviews and higher salary offers.

## **TIP #2 – USE DESIGN THAT GRABS ATTENTION**

Employers make snap judgments when glancing at your resume. If they see unrelated job titles or skills, the likelihood is very high that they will make an immediate assumption that you are not qualified for the job you want. Adding to this problem is the fact that employers don't have the time to read through each of your job descriptions to determine if you have the skills they need.

You must do that for them! The design of your resume must highlight the most important information about your work experience, skills and education. At first glance this information forms the image that employers have of your skills and abilities.

### **TIP #3 – CREATE CONTENT THAT SELLS**

Resume design should get attention but it's really the content of your resume, the descriptions you include of your skills and abilities, that determine how many interviews you generate – as well as the level of salary offers you receive. Compare the before and after statements from Roger's resume shown below:

***Before Resume:***

- Maintained records for accounts receivable and accounts payable accounts.

***After Resume:***

- Managed over 1,000 accounts receivable and payable accounts working directly with the Chief Financial Officer.

Which of these examples presents Roger as being more qualified, having high skills and worth a higher salary? As this example illustrates, our image of Roger is changed and elevated when we read the after example.

### **TIP #4 – QUANTIFY AND USE POWER WORDS**

As Roger's "after" statement demonstrates, using numbers to describe your achievements and responsibilities can greatly expand and elevate your image. Using numbers and quantifying information create vivid images in our mind when we read them, whereas general statements like the before example, are easy to skip over and forget. Typically the more specific you can be in describing your duties, the better.

Another strategy that is extremely important in controlling the image that employers develop about you – is to use power words or verbs that match the level of position you want. For example, Roger wants to use the experience he's gained to move into a management position. To strengthen his image, he should use as many "management oriented" words as possible. Which example below do you think is the strongest?

***Typical Verbs:***

Gave work assignments to staff of entry level accounting clerks.

***Power Words:***

Directed workflow, supervised and trained accounting staff performing posting to general ledger, accounts receivable and payable accounts.

### **TIP #5 – ANALYZE ADS AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS TO IDENTIFY KEY WORDS**

Learning how to analyze the key words that employers provide in help wanted ads and job descriptions is a key element in creating powerful resumes. For example,

read the ad Roger found for an accounts receivable manager below and see how many key words, phrases or skill descriptions that it includes.

***Accounts Receivable Manager***

*Seeking experienced A/R Manager to oversee accounts, manage billing and collections, train accounting and clerical staff, develop status reports for management and prepare monthly balance sheets. B.A. Degree or A.A. Degree with a minimum of 2 years experience.*

Even though this ad is small it contains 12-13 key words or phrases that should be addressed in Roger's resume. Roger can use key words from an ad like this to create headings for his resume such as:

***Key Word Skill Headings***

- Management of A/R Accounts
- Billing and Collections
- Supervision of Accounting and Administrative Staff
- Balance Sheet and Management Status Report

**TIP #6 – IDENTIFY AND SOLVE EMPLOYER'S HIDDEN NEEDS**

In addition to the skills or needs listed in the ad shown above, the employer will have many more needs that Roger should identify and address in his resume and cover letter. For example, this employer will need someone who can deal effectively with other departments and research accounting issues to solve problems. To beat today's heavy competition for jobs, it's important that you identify and anticipate the full range of needs each employer faces and show how you can solve those needs.

**TIP #7 – SELL THE BENEFITS OF YOUR SKILLS**

Most resumes provide a list of duties that each applicant has been responsible for – without explaining the benefit of those skills to employers. For example, a secretary's resume might state she can type 80 wpm and is extremely accurate. This statement lacks an explanation of how her typing speed and accuracy benefit an employer's bottom line. The real benefit is that the employee can produce more work and ultimately save the employer money. A better statement for this person's resume would be:

***Selling The Benefits of Skills:***

- Achieve top production volume by maintaining high degree of accuracy with typing speed at 80 wpm.
- Cut labor expense over \$6,000 annually by eliminating the need for part-time word-processing staff.

## **TIP # 8 – CREATE AN IMAGE THAT MATCHES THE SALARY YOU WANT**

As you write your resume, keep in mind the level of job and salary you want. Be sure to create an image that presents you at the appropriate level. For example, language used in a resume for an \$8-an-hour position is much different than the language used for a \$16-an-hour position. Lynn has a health insurance claims management position making \$42,000 per year. She had retrained for the accounting field and hadn't yet gained any "direct accounting experience" although she had prepared monthly accounting reports as a department manager.

***Lynn's original resume began with this statement:***

Seeking an entry-level position in the accounting field.

What pay rate do you think this statement would motivate employers to offer Lynn?

***A much better statement would be:***

Seeking and accounting position utilizing my experience:

- Managing a department and their accounting for up to \$25,000 in monthly claims

As you can see, the last statement greatly elevates Lynn's image and will be much more likely to generate salary offers comparable to her last pay rate.

## **TIP #9 – PRIORITIZE THE CONTENT OF YOUR RESUME**

Another big mistake that job seekers make is to list very important data in the lower sections of their job descriptions. As you compile statements for your resume, prioritize them by importance, impressiveness and relevance to the job you want. Remember, that a strong statement, which uses power words and quantifies will affect every statement under it. Out of the two statements below, which one has the most impact?

***Unprioritized:***

- Maintained records control, filing, office supply purchasing and maintenance.
- Managed front office functions to support the president, vice president and staff of 20 sales representatives.

***Prioritized:***

- Managed front office functions to support the president, vice president and staff of 20 sales representatives.
- Maintained records control, filing, office supply purchasing and equipment maintenance.

## **TIP #10 – TWEAK AND TARGET YOUR RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS**

You will generate many more interviews by tweaking your resume and cover letter so that they address the specific skills each employer requests. For example, Sally originally wanted a customer service position, but found an ad for a retail management opening. How well qualified do the headings in the left hand column present her for the retail management position? Do you think the headings in the right hand column will generate more and better interviews for a retail management position?

- Customer Service
- Cash Accountability
- Computer Skills
- Retail Management/Customer Service
- Cash Accountability/Supervision of Retail Stations
- Retail Accounting Applications

Sally's actual title had been lead cashier, even though she managed her own retail cashiering station in addition to 6 other cashiers and stations. This "relabeling" is entirely truthful and is extremely important in landing more interviews because it allows job seekers to apply for, and look qualified for, a wider range of jobs.