Solution

Résumé Excellence Checklist

Three major principles define résumé excellence:
1. **Search-ability:** Key word search is optimized so automated systems can find you
2. **Easy to read:** Well-formatted for reading both online and print
3. **Quantitative:** Numeric proof of your brilliance

Here's how those principles apply:

Résumé Excellence #1—Search-ability:

You, the applicant, could be the best person for the job, but if your résumé is not found in a search, the probability that you will even be considered is low to negligible. A searchable résumé is key so you can be found in various technology engines such as:

- Job board résumé databases
- Employer applicant tracking systems
- Employer email systems
- Social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Web search engines

What are "keywords?" They are the words used for searching and finding appropriate candidates. In today's new job search era, recruiters, screeners, employers, and others are fluent in the symbols and tricks for searching for candidates using keyword searches.

For example, if an employer is filling a Marketing Communications position, the keywords are the words associated with the requirements of the job:

- Skills (communications, writing, advertising, presentation, collaboration, teamwork, project management, etc.)
- Tools (Microsoft Office—Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher)
- Education (MBA, BA, BS, AA, AS, high school, etc.)
- Location (state, city, even if willing to relocate)

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Where should your keywords be? Everywhere.

- Filename of your résumé or profile (for those that are emailed)
- Title of your résumé or profile (for those in systems that use entry titles, like LinkedIn and craigslist)
- Body of your résumé or profile
- Body of your LinkedIn profile
- Twitter bio
- Facebook page

How can I make my keywords more powerful?

Customize the keywords on your résumé if you have more than one kind of job goal: Your keywords can be customized for the position you seek. If you are looking for more than one kind of job (more than one target job title), the résumé used for each job should be directly related to the keywords appropriate for that job.

Add more nouns: Nouns? But we were all taught to use "power verbs," such as "developed, collaborated, designed, and led." But the "what" that you performed, the action, is just as important. In the following examples, the underlined nouns are the keywords that relate to the action indicated by the verbs:

- Led global cross-functional teams for plan review and sign-off.
- Designed and executed online marketing campaigns and events.
- Managed advertising agencies, $1M+ budgets, and cost analysis.
- Functioned in lead project management role.
- Oversaw editorial calendar, content distribution, and competitive analysis.

There are many good articles about keywords for résumés online, so please spend more time in mastering this critical NEW job search criteria. The simplest way to learn what the best keywords are for your job target is to read job descriptions! For example:

Seeking experienced Accounts Receivables Manager to oversee accounts, manage billing and collections, train accounting and clerical staff, develop status reports for management, and prepare monthly balance sheets. BA degree or AA degree with minimum of 2 years' experience required.

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Résumé Excellence #2—Easy to Read:

The content of your résumé is by far the most important factor. But design is important, too:

- Your résumé must be easy to read and good design makes that possible. Design calls attention to key sections of your résumé, such as work experience and education.
- A well-designed résumé reflects positively on your skills. Sloppy or careless design may give a negative impression, even if you're well-qualified.

There are several techniques you can use to create a highly readable and attractive résumé. The table below lists some of the most important.

Technique	Why It's Important
White space	Lots of white space makes text easier to read. Text that's too dense may discourage time-pressed readers from reading further.
Bullets	Bulleted text allows you to break down complex information into readable chunks and also highlight key points.
Easy-to-scan headings	Your reader should be able to quickly locate key areas on your résumé, such as education, without extensive searching.
Limited number of fonts	Use no more than two font styles—one for headings and the other for body text. More than that is distracting.
Selective use of bold	Use bold carefully and consistently. For example, if you bold the name of one company you've worked for, do it in all cases.
No underlining (except links)	Reserve underlined text for web links. If you need to emphasize something, use bold.
Consistent spacing	Use the same amount of space before and after headings, between bullets, etc. This gives your résumé a uniform look.

There are thousands of great examples on the web. Add this to your job search schedule as an area to spend time on. For those of you really stuck, invest in a résumé writing service.

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Creating a plain-text résumé

Although most companies will be able to handle your résumé in Word or PDF format, you may need to have a plain-text résumé that's been stripped of formatting. To create one, follow these steps:

- Copy your résumé into a plain text editor like Notepad (Windows) or TextEdit (Mac) and save it. Most of the formatting should be gone.
- Change any remaining bullets to asterisks, and space once after the asterisk.
- For your main section headings, such as Work Experience, change to all caps so the headings stand out.
- Add spacing between sections as necessary for readability.

See this sample plain-text résumé for Beth Smith, an administrative assistant seeking work as a project coordinator.

BETH SMITH, CAPM
215 W. State Street, Milwaukee, WI 53201
bethsmith@comcast.net
www.linkedin.com/beth-smith
Cell: 555-263-1678
PROJECT COORDINATOR
Highly motivated, tech-savvy professional with over 5 years' experience in a fast-paced consulting environment. Extensive experience supporting senior consultants in high-profile technology projects. Exceptional analytical ability and talent for managing information. Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) certification.

Proficient in:
* Project Coordination
* Project Setup & Monitoring
* Project Communication
* Microsoft SharePoint
* Microsoft Project
* Microsoft Excel
PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
2005–Present: Senior Administrative Assistant, Grant Technology Consulting. Advanced administrative and project support for senior-level consultants.
Project Coordination/Management
* Led a project to streamline and reorganize SharePoint project management system, resulting in more accessible information and enhanced support for clients.

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* Coordinated project plan, scheduling, and budgeting for small but high-profile project during project manager's absence. Praised for initiative and problem-solving abilities.

Advanced Administrative Support

* Prepared best-practice guidelines for archiving project documents. Guidelines simplified document management process and were adopted company-wide.

* Conducted research and trained staff on new techniques for document versioning that significantly reduced retrieval time and lost documents.

2001–2005: Administrative Assistant, Training Solutions, Inc. Advanced administrative support to top marketing executive in fast-paced training start-up company.

Project Coordination/Management

* Coordinated the research and production of client-winning training proposals.

* Streamlined proposal development process, resulting in significant time savings.

Advanced Administrative Support

* Planned and assembled materials for high-profile client meetings.

* Created new client tracking system using Microsoft Excel.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM), 2009

Microsoft SharePoint Power User Training, 2010

Microsoft SharePoint End User Training, 2009

Advanced Microsoft Project, 2008

Advanced Microsoft Excel, 2008

EDUCATION

Associate Degree, Business Administration & Management,

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, 2001

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Project Management Institute

American Management Association, Individual Member

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Résumé Excellence #3—Quantitative

Hiring managers, recruiters, and HR managers are so tired of "world-class marketing person" or "exceeded targets in…" or "best in class performance." You need to prove your results right in your résumé. Job candidates tell me they will wait until the interview to share them or say, "My successes cannot be quantified." Cut the Crap, Get a Job!

Not many job types, such as sales, can claim "exceeded budget by 12% or $3 million dollars" or "ran a team with a quota of $800,000." However, there are a number of other qualitative results that you can display proudly on your résumé.

You could have been 1 selected out of 500 to represent your team at a meeting. You delivered a major project on time and under budget by X%. You won some awards or have been promoted in a certain amount of months, X, well above the company average of Y. Do this: Think about your soft skills (the ability to meet deadlines, work in a team or independently, communicate complex ideas, placate customers). Relate an occasion where those skills made a difference to your company. Many of you have been assigned to a critical project, included in client or executive meetings, recommended for special training, or asked to make a presentation.

Here is a final example to help you out:

Before	After
Maintained accounts receivables and accounts payables.	Managed over 2,500 accounts receivables and accounts payables, working directly with the Chief Financial Officer.

In summary, when you rewrite your résumé to compete in today's era of job search, look for opportunities to quantify, without sharing confidential information, of course. Think of power verbs, (like reduced, saved, made, grew, etc.) and combine them with metrics, such as time (number of months, days, or years), dollars, growth percentages, comparison to market averages, comparisons to company or peer averages.

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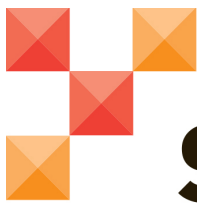
Solution

Résumé Excellence Checklist

Search-ability

- ☐ Key words associated with job requirements:
  - o Skills
  - o Tools
  - o Education
  - o Location
- ☐ Where key words should be used:
  - o Résumé, profile, or candidate packet file name
  - o Résumé, profile, or candidate packet title (for systems like LinkedIn and Craig's List)
  - o Résumé, profile, or candidate packet body
- ☐ Key words customize for each job goal
- ☐ Key words used as nouns related to action verbs

Easy to Read

- ☐ Use of white space to balance text
- ☐ Bullets to break down complex information and highlight key points
- ☐ Easy-to-scan headings
- ☐ No more than two fonts
- ☐ Selective and consistent use of bold
- ☐ No underlining – except hyperlinks
- ☐ Consistent spacing
- ☐ Plain-text Résumé
  - o Copy résumé into a text editor like Notepad or TextEdit, and save.
  - o Change bullets to asterisks and space once after each asterisk
  - o Change main section headings to all caps
  - o Add spacing between sections as needed

Quantitative

- ☐ Combine power verbs with metrics
  - o Time (months, days, or years)
  - o Dollars
  - o Growth percentages
  - o Comparison to market averages
  - o Comparison to company or peer averages
  - o Others?

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