

CSP E-Lesson 7, Fall 2008

Words of Wisdom: "Creating a good resume and cover letter not only landed me the interview I wanted; it also prepared me for what I wanted to say in the interview."



Mark Landry, 22, Physical Therapist, Orlando, FL

You Have 30 Seconds to Impress Me

"Did any of the resumes impress you, Mr. Lane? The position available in our public relations department is one of our most important." Judith Barnes, the hiring manager for Lane Industries, looks at the stack of resumes that her boss has been reviewing.

Will Lane gives Judith a crooked smile. "Yes, but some of them didn't impress me the way the applicants intended! Don't people realize that we take only about 30 seconds on our first review of a resume? I just decide whether the person is worth thinking about further, then I move on."

"Look at this one!" Will continues. "I'd need a dictionary to read it. The applicant tried to impress me with big words. And this next woman gave me her life story, but didn't tell me which job she's applying for." Will Lane sighs deeply and tosses the two resumes aside. "Then there is this man; he claims to be single-handedly responsible for getting newspapers to write stories about his company, but he's only worked there for six months. I think he's exaggerating," Will chuckles as he shows the resume to Judith.

"Here's one that will make you feel better, Mr. Lane." Judith hands her boss a neatly organized resume. "This person has exactly the education and experience we need. And he includes a cover letter that sounds like he's familiar with our company. He's enthusiastic about working here."

The purpose of a resume is to get you an interview, not to get you hired. After reading the observations made by Will Lane and his hiring manager, list three do's and don'ts for creating your resume.

Do's

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Don'ts

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

"I Am the Greatest"

Muhammad Ali may go down in history as the greatest heavyweight boxing champion of all time. And he had no difficulty saying so! He deliberately made bold statements, saying "I float like a butterfly and sting like a bee!" to describe his boxing abilities. He thought dramatic comments like that would get him the fights he needed to become a legend.

Like Ali, if you want to "get in the ring" of your field, you must analyze yourself thoroughly and honestly, then identify the qualities that will get you noticed.

Employers scan resumes quickly. What they read at the top of the first page either grabs their attention or causes them to lose interest. The material at the top of your resume should explain why employers should want you above anyone else. The best way to present the information is with a great lead-in sentence and short, easy-to-read, follow-up phrases.

Here is the beginning of a resume for a person who is applying for a camp counselor position.

Camp counseling is in my DNA. From the time I began going to camp myself, becoming a counselor has been my dream. If you choose me, here's what I'll bring to the job.

- High-energy, team spirit, strong academic skills, athletic background
- The ability to motivate others
- Reputation for honesty and ethical conduct
- The 2005 Service Excellence award for mentoring younger students in sports and math
- Certification in First Aid and CPR.

Are you a self-starter? Dependable? Motivated? Do you do volunteer work? Can you speak a second language? What makes you perfect for a job you want? Remember, you will have to back up what you say, so be honest about what would make you a good fit. Write a short lead-in for your resume, one that describes your best qualities. Sell yourself!

Grab the “Keys” and the Power

Do you know that some companies convert resumes to electronic documents and put them through a scanner? The scanner awards points based on how many key words or power verbs are found. That’s right, the perfect resume you slaved over can be tossed aside simply because your key word count is low!

Not every company uses this technology. However, even if a machine isn’t looking for your key words and power verbs, the employer or hiring manager who scans your resume probably is.

No matter whether your resume is scanned electronically or read by a human, you need to identify and use key words and power verbs to catch the attention of employers.

Key Words

Employers look for key words that show an applicant is right for a job. These words relate to specific skills, training, previous job titles, education and experience that match the industry and the particular position available. The more you target your key words to the job and industry, the more likely you are to be considered for an interview. For example, if you are applying for a job as a sales representative, important key words and phrases might include: sales strategies, market share, communication, customer service and sales objectives.

Match the industries below to their related phrases. Underline the key words.

A. Healthcare

C. Internet merchandising

E. Hospitality

B. Information technology

D. Retail

1. ___ Managed a 400-seat restaurant
2. ___ Exceeded monthly sales targets
3. ___ Created a report for physicians and nurses
4. ___ Gained extensive experience in database management
5. ___ Planned an e-commerce marketing campaign

Grab the "Keys" and the Power (Continued)

Your Key Words

Identify an industry that interests you and list three key words or phrases that you think employers might search for.

Industry: _____

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Key Words for All Careers Many key words can apply to all careers. Some examples are "team building," "decision making," and "experience".

Tip: The words you see repeated over and over in job ads and descriptions are key words.

Think about your accomplishments and the skills you've developed so far. You may have learned them in part-time jobs, sports, social relationships, volunteering, education and other situations.

Choose three key words from the following list and use them in a phrase about yourself. For example: *Active team builder on the swim team.* You may also add other key words that describe you.

productivity	strategies	leadership	technology
customer service	performance	communications	successfully completed
ability	awarded	software	Internet
ethics	interpersonal	adaptable	develop relationships
negotiate	analysis	trusted	problem-solving
verbal and written communication skills	bilingual	presentation skills	

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Grab the “Keys” and the Power (Continued)

Power Verbs

Power verbs are action words that make a description sound more important or powerful. These words add a tone of confidence and purpose to your resume and increase your chances of landing an interview. You can use power verbs to describe your experience, skills and abilities.

Which phrase sounds more confident and powerful?

- Started an online newsletter for new products
or
- Launched and implemented an online newsletter to introduce new products and services

From the choices provided below, select the best power verb for the following phrases.

1. _____ weekly marketing reports.
a. Wrote b. Prepared c. Generated

2. _____ the highest number of new accounts in one month.
a. Achieved b. Opened c. Set up

3. _____ productivity by installing a new filing system.
a. Helped improve b. Increased c. Contributed to

4. _____ the Earth Foundation annual grant for innovative landscape design.
a. Received b. Awarded c. Earned

5. _____ company's material costs 30% by negotiating with vendors.
a. Slashed b. Reduced c. Lowered

Critique Needed

All resumes include standard sections, such as a career objective, qualifications profile, education, and experience. To make sure you include all of these important elements, your resume should be evaluated by someone with a keen eye. (References, which previously were listed in resumes, now are usually provided only if a candidate is a finalist for a job.)

Here are some general tips for writing a good resume:

- Be clear
- Keep it simple
- Be positive
- Don't lie or exaggerate
- Use correct spelling and grammar

Following are examples of different sections of a resume written by Rita Rosario. Rita is applying for the job of customer service representative at Simone's Wedding Caterers. She is a creative and energetic person who can handle many tasks at the same time. Practice your proofreading and critiquing skills by using the general tips listed above and the specific tips that follow.

Rita's Career Objective

Here is Rita's first attempt at writing a career objective.

Career Objective: Now that my son is old enough to go to school, I can go to work. My objective is to earn enough money to save for his education. I know how to use a computer, and I'm willing to learn any kind of business.

Tip: A career objective is used to identify your fit for a specific job. It should focus on how you can help the company, not on how the company can help you. It tells the employer that you have a sense of purpose and direction.

Critique Needed (Continued)

Career objectives are used less often in resumes these days. If you choose to write one, you will need a revised version for each employer. A career objective should:

- Focus on the employer's needs, not yours
- Be concise and specific
- Use key words and power verbs
- Avoid using the words "I" or "me"

Look at the excellent career objective below that was written by a community sport director.

Example: Career objective

Desire to contribute to a healthier Mayfield neighborhood environment through my dedication, strong communication skills, organizational abilities, and athletic skills.

Rita's Career Objective

Rewrite Rita Rosario's career objective from the previous page using what you have learned so far.

Your Career Objective

Now that you've practiced writing a career objective for Rita Rosario, think of a career you are interested in and write a career objective for yourself.

Tip: Begin a computer file to save resume material that you can use in the future. Keeping an ongoing file will help you update, edit and tailor your material without starting from scratch each time you need a resume.

Critique Needed (Continued)

Rita's Qualifications Profile

Here is Rita's profile listing the qualifications she believes will help her provide good customer service.

- I plan all of our family reunions. We have over ninety family members including cousins.
- I help my Spanish-speaking neighbors fill out important documents.
- I showed neighborhood volunteers how to turn an empty lot into a community vegetable garden.
- I cook for my family and friends. I also enjoy watching cooking shows on television, where I learn new cooking terms and about different types of food.
- I use my computer to e-mail friends, shop online, and organize my recipes and household bills.

Tips: A Qualifications Profile or Summary of Skills is often used in place of a career objective. This is where you show an employer your best attributes. The profile can include skills acquired on jobs, from volunteering, or in other daily activities. A profile or summary should:

- Highlight skills and experience needed in the specific job you want
- Use key words and power verbs
- Be neat, well spaced, and easy to read
- Use numbers and figures where appropriate

Example: Qualifications Profile for a graphic designer

- Created design proposals for projects over \$350,000
- Completed layout of a 400-page policy manual for the U.S. government on time and under budget
- Was honored as Designer of the Year by Sunny Rock Chamber of Commerce
- Collaborated with creative team of a Fortune 100 company to produce marketing materials in both print publications and on Web sites
- Proficient in all commonly used computer graphics programs

Critique Needed (Continued)

Rewrite the skills in Rita's profile using these power verbs.

Organized _____

Fluent _____

Supervised _____

Familiar with _____

Skilled in computer _____

Your Qualifications Profile

List five of your skills and abilities that will help you perform the job you selected when you wrote your career objective. Remember to use power verbs.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Rita's Education

The purpose of listing your education is to convince your employer that you are qualified for the job. To present your education in the most effective way, follow these guidelines:

- Include only your most relevant education.
- List your most recent education first.
- Place your education section at the best spot on the page. If your educational background is impressive, you may want to list it above your work experience.

Critique Needed (Continued)

Here is one way to list education qualifications for a marketing position.

Stephenson State University, Roman Landing, CT
Bachelor of Science in Marketing May 2000
GPA 3.22

Roman Landing Community College, Roman landing, CT
Course: Consumer psychology Dec 1999

Follow a few simple rules when listing your education:

- Write the full name of your schools and the degrees or certificates you received.
- Include the date you graduated or attended, your GPA, and honors you received.
- List specific training and individual courses or seminars that are relevant.

Rita was a good student and had a 3.80 GPA when she graduated from high school. She attended Harrisville Community College the following year where she took two computer courses: Computing Essentials and Word Processing Essentials. Here is how Rita listed her education on her resume:

Adelaide H.S., Harrisville, AR June 2001
H.S. Diploma

H.C.C., Harrisville, AR 2002

List four ways Rita can improve the education section of her resume.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Critique Needed (Continued)

Your Education

Use the guidelines from the previous page when listing your education. Include specific courses you have taken, such as computer or business courses, which will help you in the workplace. You can also include certificates or training you have received outside of school.

Rita's Experience

The experience section of a resume includes your previous jobs. It can also include volunteer work and other life experiences that are relevant to the position. An organized experience section includes:

- Name and location of each company
- Title of your position
- Dates of employment or activities
- Descriptions of duties and responsibilities

Example of how to describe previous jobs

Regional Sales Manager	January 2000 - October 2006
Action Electronics, Westwood, PA	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Initiated a new sales strategy to develop online sales➤ Targeted major retailers and negotiated more favorable pricing➤ Drove sales levels to a new high of \$750,000 in 2005	

Critique Needed (Continued)

Rita describes her valuable volunteer experience by saying, "I rounded up residents in the neighborhood to turn a vacant lot into a community garden. I planned a work schedule. I learned what vegetables would grow well in the area, talked the local hardware store into donating the vegetable seeds, and showed everyone how to clean up the lot and tend to the vegetables."

Use the following power verbs to describe four of Rita's responsibilities on the project.

Recruited Supervised Researched Initiated Persuaded

Volunteer Project Manager	May 2007
Harrisville Community Garden	
➤ _____	
➤ _____	
➤ _____	
➤ _____	

Your Experience

Begin to build the experience section of your resume by listing the responsibilities and duties you have had on a job or a project.

_____ (job title)	_____ (dates)
_____ (location or name of project)	
➤ _____	
➤ _____	
➤ _____	
➤ _____	

Getting Past the Gatekeeper

Job hunting is work! It takes time. In order to get a job, you must first land an interview. In order to land an interview, you must have an excellent resume. In order to get your resume reviewed by an employer, you must have an outstanding cover letter.

Today many employers place as much importance on a cover letter as they do the resume. In the letter, they expect you to give them a good reason to spend their time reading your resume.

The cover letter must be brief, or it won't be read. It should summarize your abilities, express your desire for the job, and show off your communication skills in no more than three short paragraphs. The cover letter is your best opportunity to convince an employer to interview you.

The three, short paragraphs should contain these elements:

- Paragraph one: Tell why you are writing; name the job you are interested in and how you learned of it. Use words that will "hook" readers so they'll want to continue reading.
- Paragraph two: Identify one or two of your qualifications that will most appeal to the employer. Tell the employer why you are interested in the position.
- Paragraph three: Thank the employer for considering your resume and specifically request an interview.

To write your letter, follow these guidelines:

- Use a standard letter format.
- Address the letter to a specific person.
- Show that you are knowledgeable about the company.
- Focus on the needs of the employer.
- Ask someone with good written communication skills to proofread your letter for spelling and grammar.
- Be positive and express enthusiasm.
- Be honest.

Getting Past the Gatekeeper (Continued)

Example of the first paragraph of a cover letter for an elementary school teacher position

Dear Principal Parsons:

The high-quality education that Francis Winters Elementary School students receive inspires me, and I am eager to bring my 10 years of experience as a second-grade teacher to the school. You will find me enthusiastic about education and a believer in the goals you've set for teachers and students. My post-graduate credentials and respected references make me an excellent candidate for the position that you advertised online.

Your cover letter's first paragraph

Local business man Terry Fitzsimmons of Fitzsimmons Photography Studio is looking for a sales representative for his growing business. Practice writing the first paragraph of a cover letter to Terry Fitzsimmons by filling in the blanks of the letter below.

Dear Mr. Fitzsimmons

Friends recently purchased _____
from _____. They were so impressed with the
quality of _____ that when I saw your advertisement for a sales
representative I _____
_____. I am a _____ person
who can bring _____
_____ to
your organization.

Make Yourself Shine

You've learned how to write each part of a resume and how to write a cover letter. Now, put your new skills to work by writing your own resume and cover letter. You may apply for the job described in the following ad or choose one from your local newspaper or from an online advertisement.

Personal Fitness Trainer

Contact: Jeff Brandeis – Personnel Manager

Lookin' Good Fitness center
1056 Lakeview Blvd.
Swedes Town, OH 12645

Lookin' Good Fitness is seeking personal trainers who are devoted to clients and will help them achieve their individual fitness goals. Our clients seek to increase their muscle strength, muscle endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance. Trainers must provide individualized personal service and supervise a fitness program that meets the client's physical needs.

Requirements:

- Personal trainer certification
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Assertiveness, enthusiasm and punctuality
- Strong communication skills
- Exceptional customer service skills

You may use the formats provided on the following pages or locate others from another source. Print your resume and save a copy for your resume file.

Resume

Your name, postal address, phone number and e-mail address

Qualifications Profile or Career Objective

Education

Experience (School activities may be used here if you have limited experience.)

Cover Letter

Your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address

Date

Name of person you are writing

Title of person you are writing

Company name

Company address

Dear

Paragraph One

Paragraph Two

Paragraph Three

Sincerely,
Your signature