

# RITASUE SIEGEL RESOURCES

an Aquent company

## RESUME GUIDE

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### First Impression

The first contact you initiate with a prospective employer or headhunter will usually include an emailed resume. It is a business document that traditionally supplies standard information - name, contact information, location, work experience and education. An emailed resume, usually sent as an attachment, must be written and formatted to capture the interest of a prospective employer in the ten lines, or it simply will not be read any further.

A brief cover letter is often appropriate, but most prospective employers or recruiters go straight to the resume to see if your experience meets their baseline requirements before reading the cover letter. Clarity, brevity and relevance of content are important characteristics of a resume, as are organization, readability, and quality of information, writing style, correct spelling and grammar. Ergonomically speaking, the viewer looks first to see your name and then your location. What's expected next is where you are employed or have worked most recently.

This guide is meant to be like a checklist to ensure that you provide all the information a prospective employer or headhunter wants to see in a resume. It does not give design guidelines. Although an overly designed resume in Word or a PDF with a background pattern with lots of different fonts usually doesn't work, there are ways to use a simple typeface or two, the bold function, margins and line spacing that can make the document quite appealing and easy to read.

### Customize

The trick to getting your resume noticed is customization, not by design, but by content. If you are responding to a position posted on a prospective employer's website or job posting site, the description will summarize the responsibilities of the position and the requirements needed to qualify. If your resume does not present your experience in light of what the prospective employer is looking for, you will not get a phone call or email from them expressing interest. If you are sending your resume to an organization you are interested in and not to a job posting, you will need to write a resume that will give them a reason to call you, and the reason cannot reside (only) in the cover letter.

Before beginning to write, design a simple resume format that will work in Word or PDF. Be religious about readability, clarity and brevity; don't go smaller than 10-point type. Don't use any background illustration or tone that will interfere with it being easy to read. The resume has to be accessible to a wide variety of recipients—a CEO, human resources specialist, director of an in-house design group, principal in a design firm, or senior people in engineering, marketing, user experience, corporate communications or design research.

Write a "master" resume (the one you will later customize) using the following suggestions. You will need to customize it when applying for specific positions so that the information about your experience and objectives dovetails with the job opening's stated requirements. I am not suggesting that you distort or be untruthful. If you think about it carefully, you will be able describe your experience on each job in light

of what the prospective employer is looking for. Your resume has to tell them that you can do what they are scanning resumes to find, at least in part, or you will not be selected for further investigation.

If you are not applying for a specific position but reaching out to an organization you are interested in, the resume must provide information about you that people in that organization will care about, even if you are a new graduate.

## Format

The following describes an American-style resume format. People from other countries aiming to work in the US are encouraged to follow it.

Your resume should not be longer than two pages; one should suffice for a new graduate. Put your name, telephone numbers web address and email address on the top of the first page: Also put your name on the second page if using one. (Find formats for curriculum vitas (CVs) for teaching positions online.)

## Identification & Contact Information

Use a professional email address. great\_designer2 “at” yahoo.com, or the one you share with family, janmobobkaren “at” hotmail.com will not encourage prospective employers to open your mail the way a straightforward one that clearly identifies who it is from will. charlessteinman “at” earthlink.net or veronicadaymon “a” hotmail.com are the way to go.

It is OK not to supply your street address as long as you provide city, state or country. Don’t want to be called at work? Don’t provide your office telephone number. Don’t want to be emailed at work? Don’t email from your work email address or put it on your resume. If your current location and telephone number are temporary, indicate how long you will be there and provide a permanent location and/or telephone. Provide area codes, url(s) and zip or postal codes where appropriate. Distinguish day or office numbers from cell and home numbers as appropriate. An email address makes it easy for the recipient to contact you at any time.

## Summary/Objective

Follow contact information with a brief summary of your aspirations, interests, experience, skills and/or objectives. The summary/objective provides the perfect vehicle for customization and should be brief, at most three lines. Include a summary only if you have a clear and meaningful one.

Here’s an example of a simple objective from:

A user experience designer:

*“My Goal - To create revolutionary products that are beautiful, smart and easy to use.”<sup>1</sup>*

A former managing director of a consultancy:

*“Pragmatic, decisive general manager and brand building expert widely recognized for adding value in complex businesses and in domestic and international settings. Crafts strategies and programs grounded in consumer insight and customer focus and ensures impeccable execution. Develops and motivates individual and collective talents and instills a sense of employee enterprise, ownership, urgency and accountability.”<sup>2</sup>*

A new graduate:

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<sup>1</sup> From candidate’s resume; identity protected by confidentiality.

<sup>2</sup> ibid

*“Recent graduate with strong communication, problem-solving and critical thinking skill sets interested in project management or design career.”*

Forget “looking for a challenge.” Everyone is. Don’t respond to a posting for a design position in a corporate setting with an objective stating a preference for a consulting office.

## **Work Experience**

List your work experience in reverse chronological order (current/most recent job first). Start with name of the company, your title (Senior Design Lead, User Interface Research and Development, or Research/Teaching Assistant (Information Design), followed by dates of employment (month and year). Start the description of your responsibilities with a brief description of the company or organization if not obvious: (“Office furniture manufacturer,” “Small brand design consultancy or \$50 billion consumer products company,” for example).

If you have had a lot of experience and several jobs, plan a two-page resume. With the chronology of jobs on the first page, use the second one to amplify the descriptions, including the business results of your activities. Give details about recent positions, but not about the ones held over 15 years ago. Bullet points rather than sentences are fine. Be specific about recent positions, but not about the ones held 15 years ago (unless one is more relevant than more recent ones to the job you seek). Describe the details of each position: what was the objective, what did you do to help to achieve it, how many people did you supervise, how many people had responsibilities similar to yours, (one of three design managers, for ex.), and your reporting relationships. If describing work in a consulting environment, name clients, the projects you worked on for them, and the results achieved. List temporary employment only if it is relevant to the position you seek or in some way enhances your candidacy. Clearly indicate if you have been freelancing or working as a project consultant. Recent graduates should include summer, part-time, freelance and co-op experiences and describe them briefly. Remember that all information you provide is easy to check, and many large companies do. Do not claim a degree you do not have or an employer you did not work for. Do not reveal confidential information about former employers. Use accurate dates.

As a general rule, describe the positions according to the time spent in them and their relative importance to your career. You may want to list, but not describe, very early positions held unless they add something important to your qualifications in relation to your current objectives. Leave them out or write “May 1978 to March 1985” various design positions.

Don’t emphasize experiences you don’t want to repeat. If you have had a wide range of responsibilities, but only want to retain some of them in future jobs, write in detail about the ones you want to do more of, and either ignore the others, or mention them discreetly.

## **Education**

Use reverse chronological order here too. List name of most recent educational institution attended and location followed by degree, month and year, major/specialization, dissertation, thesis title, grade point average (GPA) if excellent, and honors and awards received, if any. Including dates of attendance is optional. Recent bachelor’s degree program graduates can include thesis subject and description, especially if relevant to their objectives. Do not provide a complete course list. Include high school only if it was geared to your professional objective.

List any additional courses or training you have had before or after receiving your degree(s) and certificates earned in this section.

## **Technical Skills (optional)**

Don't include just a software list, but also task analysis, user profiles, usability testing, brainstorming moderator, and so on. List any patents held.

If you have many awards, presentations, panels and or publication credits, start a section called "Professional Activities." List organization and society memberships, conferences attended, professional licenses earned or studying for, exhibitions, travel, visits to factories in Asia or elsewhere and so on. (Architects may put registration information here or after name at the beginning of the resume.)

Architects with many years of experience may use a third page for a project list organized into project types.

## **Personal Information**

Personal information is optional. It is against US law for prospective employers to ask questions about age, gender, marital status, religion, race, national origin, military service or health status before hiring. If there is cause for question, indicate your US and other work authorization(s) here.

## **Other Information**

List anything else about you that will interest a prospective employer in an "other" section: language skills, special interests, knowledge or talents not evident from your employment history.

## **Ethics**

All information you provide is easy to check, and many large companies do check degrees claimed, former employers and dates of employment. They often do credit checks. An offer of employment to one candidate we recommended was withdrawn when the employer found he was one credit short of the degree he listed on his resume.

## **You Can't Hide**

One last thought. Some people will take the time to "Facebook" or "MySpace" you. Avoid posting content on these types of sites that may seem inappropriate to a representative of a prospective employer.