

“Résumé Strategies E-Guide”



The Career Academy, LLC



The Gateway to Career Empowerment

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CONTENTS

Career Empowerment Message	Page 3
The Professional's Résumé	Page 4
Text Version Résumés.....	Page 6
The Résumé Reference Page / Who's Your Best References	Page 8
Cover Letters	Page 9
Thank-You Letters	Page 11
Résumé and Job/Career Fairs	Page 12
Recruiters and Employment Agencies	Page 14
Interviewing Preparation	Page 18
The Career Portfolio—The Latest in Career Management	Page 18
Suggested Readings—Favorite Picks	Page 20
In Closing	Page 21

Career Empowerment

This guide was developed to assist you in making the most of your newly designed or re-designed career tools. Often I'll refer to the career search as *career empowerment*. Believe it or not, you have more control over your destiny than you may think. Opportunity is all around us, but when we become myopic in our sights, we lose focus and allow possibilities to slip through our hands. How many times have we said, if only I would have... or I should have handled that differently? Unfortunately we will be saying that a few more times as we go through life. I recently read somewhere that opportunities always look bigger going than coming. How true that really is!

Set goals! Time passes by much too quickly and without goals you'll find another week, month, or year has passed and you'll be right where you started. Continue to build your skills, knowledge, and enjoy achieving your dreams. I believe that we can achieve whatever we want, but we first have to decide what that want is.

Your résumé and other career related documents are tools in helping you achieve your goals. Make no mistake; you are still ultimately responsible for your success. Stay committed and motivated and never stop growing. Learn to use your career tools effectively and become a wiser career designer. Remember, your résumé should always be ready for shifts in the job market.

I sincerely thank you for your business and wish you the best in your career success!

Michael Levy
Career Academy Director

The Professional Résumé



You probably are already aware that a résumé is one of the most important tools in your career. You are commended for taking the time to have yours professionally prepared since it is the first screening tool used by employers.

Like any other tool, you'll want to use it correctly to maximize your opportunities of getting as many interviews as possible. The following résumé strategies will contribute to this endeavor. Since employers will initially evaluate you from a document, it's critical that your résumé and cover letter promote your potential value to the position. Also, keep in mind that employers will read your résumé *very quickly*. Expect no more than about 20 to 30 seconds of skimming. However, keep in mind, the sole purpose of your résumé is to obtain job interviews! Let me say that again, *the sole purpose of your résumé is to obtain job interviews!* In other words, nobody gets hired from a piece of paper. How you conduct yourself during the job interview and the quality of your presentation will weigh heavily on your success of obtaining the job offer. During the interview, your résumé can become a script or “point paper” to be used as a reference sheet to share pertinent information with the interviewer.

The following are *strategies* for maximizing returns on your résumé:

1. Use a cover letter to introduce your résumé – even when answering internet ads (if available).
2. Avoid using awkward colored résumé paper – White or off-white is safest for business professionals. If your profession is in the “artistic” industry,

you may veer from this rule of thumb, but be careful how “expressively” you promote yourself.

3. Send your résumé with postage mail; use a 9” x 12” envelope rather than folding your résumé in thirds.
4. When applying through published ads requesting various methods of submission, i.e., fax, email, or regular mail, take advantage and do all three! Why take the chance of any one method failing?
5. *Always* follow-up with the employer after sending your résumé – inquire if your résumé has been received.

Text Version Résumé



This section is not intended to be a computer course, but a growing number of employers rely on electronic résumés as they sift through hundreds of candidates, so, it's important to understand the differences associated with a word.doc and ASCII text version résumé. There are some very distinct differences between the two types commonly known as the ASCII text and word.doc. The most noticeable feature of each version is the look itself. You'll notice your ASCII text version will not have all the fancy lines and fonts like your word.doc version. You'll most likely use the ASCII version to either post on job websites or to send to employers who require this version instead of an attached e-mail document. This is usually to avoid possible viruses, or to scan résumés for posting into a database for future reference of candidates. The following are pointers for effectively using both versions.

When using postage paid mail or faxing of your résumé, always use the word.doc version. Employers that offer e-mail will usually indicate whether they want you to attach your résumé as a word.doc or cut and paste your text version directly into your email. Make sure to carefully read the employer's request in the *how to apply* for the position section and use the appropriate version.

Make sure you use the **copy** function and not **cut** when moving your résumé from your hard drive or disk to post in an email for an employer or on a job website. Select the **paste** function to post the résumé. The copy function can be obtained by either a right click on your mouse or on your upper tool bar on your word processor. To promote maximum readability of the ASCII text version use either `*****` or `++++++` to separate headings of the résumé. This applies to the cover letter as well.

Be careful when working with job websites. The bells, whistles and hundreds of job listings can be exciting, also deceiving. Keep in mind, there are hundreds of thousands of résumés posted along with yours—return on your time is minimal. However, it is a way to broadcast your résumé. A simple internet search will bring up most of the free and pay job websites.

Résumé Reference Page



Having a list of three to six references for most employers is acceptable. References can either be past supervisors, work colleagues, community leaders, past clients, etc. Family and personal friends usually are not considered good job related references since they can be considered biased.

Employers check references to learn more about your *hire-ability*. Most employers won't disclose a specific incident, but through their tone or indication if you would be rehired under other circumstances, the future employer can often make a determination whether they wish to move forward with the hiring process.

It's not important to include a statement on your résumé indicating *references furnished upon request* since this is a given for business professionals. So, unless specifically asked for reference, don't attach your reference page to your résumé; however bring it with you at the interview. It's a good idea to let your references know you are including them as a reference so they aren't caught off guard during a reference check.

It is also recommended that you not include a potential bad reference – enough said!

If you don't have any local references or you have a sensitive situation that might provide a negative reference, include your out of state reference. But it's suggested you create business relations that might provide good character references. If you have a fence to mend, you might try mending it. Swallowing your pride can possibly pay off in your future career goals.

Cover Letters



Unfortunately many job seekers still don't use cover letters, but then again, maybe that is fortunate for you, since you have realized the importance of a quality cover letter. Most of the reasons for not preparing cover letters are laziness, haste, or the attitude that nobody reads them anyway. Whether your cover letter is generic or job specific, if you decide not to use this tool to properly introduce your résumé, then you may have to bear the consequences of being overlooked.

Cover letters shouldn't be a reiteration of your résumé nor should it be a collection of flowery words that lead the reader nowhere. Instead, it should highlight either your special skills or qualifications as it relates to the occupation, industry, or specific job requirements. A well-thought out cover letter is your key that should ignite interest for the reader to continue reading the additional information – which is, your résumé.

Job specific cover letters provide you an opportunity to outline specific skills and requirements of the position and presenting how your capabilities can fulfill that requirement. In this manner, you aren't just throwing out a list of behavioral characteristics, but instead you're getting to the specifics of the employer's needs through demonstrated past accomplishments.

As for length, cover letters should be no more than one page. Like the résumé, employers don't have time to filter through lengthy information. Be succinct, concise, and to the point while maintaining reader interest. Clichés such as, “*as you can see from my résumé*”, will not deliver the enthusiasm you seek from

the reader. Powerful opening statements should tell the reader what the benefits are in further exploring your qualifications.

Some points when preparing a cover letter:

1. Address your cover letter to a named individual if possible. Letters addressed to titles, such as, “Dear Human Resources Manager”, or even worse, “Dear Sir or Madam” can be poorly received.
2. If the position doesn’t have a named individual, leave off the salutation and just reference the position and where it was found. “RE: Sales Manager Position, Tampa Tribune, 7/20/04”.
3. Don’t wimp out! Be proactive and follow-up with the employer. Tell the employer in your letter that you will be following up. Of course if you have no way of knowing the company this could be very difficult. But if you can, take the initiative. It could make the difference.
4. Try to stay with 12 point size font—but no less than 11 point.
5. Sign your letter in blue or black ink.

Thank-You Letters



So you want to make a great impression after the interview?

Then don't forget your thank you letter! Besides your cover letter, the thank you letter will be your other most important tool. This letter can often make the difference in swaying a hiring manager's decision. Statistics indicate only about 10% of hiring managers receive a thank you letter after an interview.

Beside good business courtesy, the benefits are to your advantage. It keeps you in the interviewer's mind and one of the greatest benefits; it allows you an opportunity to provide additional information you may have forgotten during the interview.

Keep thank you letters warm, brief and sincere. Since such a small number of candidate's follow-up with a thank you, your thoughtfulness and continued interest in the position could give you an extra edge over those who ignore this important step.

The question often asked is should my letter be typed, hand-written or emailed. With the e-world we live in today, email is acceptable. This is only if you've been invited into the interviewers email box. How will you know? If you are given their business card and their personal email is on it, or if they tell you it's okay to email. Otherwise, typed and mailed is the other acceptable method. Hand-written is too personal for a job interview, save it for the networking thank you letter.

If there is more than one interviewer, send each a letter. Vary the information a sentence or two to give each a unique personal touch!

Résumés and Job/Career Fairs



Job Fairs can be quite an experience for the novice. Actually, the Job Fair can sometimes be termed synonymous with a cattle call. It's not that opportunity may not exist, but herds of people will likely show for the occasion. It's not surprising to see hundreds of job seekers.

If you haven't attended one of these functions, be prepared for a different type of event. Companies will be available to meet and greet you, sometimes even lure you with great little gifts such as pens, sticky notes pads, candy, envelope openers, etc. Job Fair listings will usually identify which companies will be attending, so have a planned strategy of who you'd like to meet.

What you'll usually find are company representatives with a stack of résumés. Instead of leaving yours on the pile, get the representative's business card and follow-up a day or two later by faxing, mailing, or emailing your résumé. However, you may want to bring some additional résumés in case you get the urge to leave yours; still follow-up.

Expect to see a variety of job seekers attending. There will be those with suits and ties, right down to others with cut off jeans and tank tops. Upcoming Job Fairs can be found in the local newspaper or Business newspapers.

Some of the companies at the fair might offer a screening interview on the spot; others may just be there collecting résumés for later review.

In making the most of the event, I offer you the following suggestions:

1. Network with Job Fair employees to obtain names of company decision makers.
2. Network with other job seekers to share strategies, job leads, and companies
3. Collect business cards to fax your résumé the next day—avoid the piles.
4. Use the opportunity to size up some of your competition—this is the job market.
5. Job Fairs yield about 6% job opportunity.
6. An advantage is you have a card and a name of the company representative—follow-up.
7. Collect lots of pens, sticky note pads and envelope opener, try to avoid the candy.

Recruiters and Employment Agencies



To begin this topic, it would be best to define what recruiters and employment agencies do. Recruiters are known under a few different titles, i.e., Headhunter, Executive Recruiter or Account Executive, either way, they don't find you jobs. That is the myth to dispel from the beginning. Executive Recruiters, as I like to refer to them are not hired by the job seeker, but instead are hired by the client company that they partnered with. In other words, they work for and are paid by the company that hired them to fill a position. Executive Recruiters are contracted with the client company either through a contingent or retained agreement. If the agreement is contingent, the Recruiter sifts through the job market to locate the most qualified and suitable candidates to present to their client company. Once the position is filled, the Recruiter is paid and the partnership ends. If the Recruiter is working under a retained agreement, they are paid whether a position is filled or not. In other words, the partnership lasts as long as the agreement in the contract between the two parties. Employment Agencies essentially may work under the same type of agreements with client companies. The major difference between the two is that Employment Agencies generally work at the entry level of candidates and Executive Recruiters generally work at the mid and upper level management levels.

So you are probably now wondering what this mean for the job seeker? It means that neither of these entities works for the job seeker. It's about timing, needs, and value. What I mean here is that if your résumé happens to hit the recruiter's or employment agencies desk at the right time that they are seeking a candidate for a specific position and your résumé is tailored to exactly what they are looking for, your chances for an interview increase. If not, you might end up in their database for future reference. However, you may or may not receive a phone call from either entity.

If they have a client that often requests your background, you may receive a courtesy call and be interviewed, but keep in mind that a position might not necessarily exist at the time. It's an interview for future possibilities.

How do you best find either of these entities you ask? Employment Agencies typically can be found in the Yellow Pages or on the Internet. Executive Recruiters can be located on the Internet, but there is also a reference book titled "The Directory of Executive Recruiters" by Kennedy Information. You can find this at your local bookstore. It is rather thick and has literally thousands of recruiter listings by various categories.

As a tip, before you start to send out hundreds of résumés to recruiters and/or employment agencies. Select the top ones you feel you can best build a partnership with as a job seeker. Peppering the job market with your résumé can work against you. Recruiters and Employment Agencies do talk to one another and you can look desperate rather than the professional job seeker you are.

Both these entities work on a referral basis as well. You can build your reputation by helping them as well. If you know of someone that would be great for a position, provide them the information. They want to send only the top performers to their client company.

Lastly, job seekers typically don't start working with agencies until they need a job. It's highly recommended to build your relationship with these entities immediately instead of when you need a job. It's another form of networking and career management.

Interviewing Preparation



As mentioned earlier, the heart of your progress will be in your interviewing techniques. Consider for a moment that you decided to compete in a 26 mile marathon (I said, just consider). Well, you certainly wouldn't wake up on the morning of the big race; throw on a pair of running shoes and hit the pavement. That would be ludicrous! However, many job seekers do this exact thing on the day of the interview. So what am I saying here? It takes planning, preparation, and practice.

The interview, like the marathon will include competitors. The only difference is that in the marathon you can size up your competition at the race, but chances are you won't know who you're competing against for the position. I call this "blind competition."

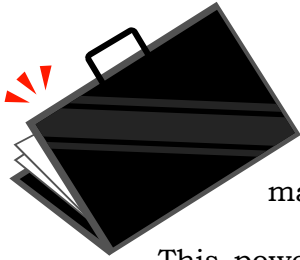
There are many books today on the shelves of book stores and libraries to help you in preparing for interviews. The internet is also swarming with interviewing tips and information. Start preparing as early as possible. This doesn't mean the day before the interview, but instead, how about becoming familiar with this intense process while you are either still working, or you know you'll be looking for a new position.

Role-playing and video taping are great ways to really prepare and practice. As much as we hate seeing ourselves on tape, it's better to clean up the noticeable problem areas during practice rather than during show time. Solicit a friend or spouse to assist you in practicing your answers to various questions that might be asked. Work on those sensitive questions so you don't look like a deer in the headlights when it comes up. Don't expect to clearly and briefly be able to handle these questions while at the interview either. Your emotions, fears, and stress level will quickly take over the minute the interviewer asks, "So, tell me a little about yourself." Many have found hiring a Career Coach to be very beneficial in preparing them for interviews too.

There are many strategies you can implement to become a strong candidate. To really make a first impression, call the interviewer the day before to confirm the appointment. This will surely distinguish you from other candidates.

Remember, the résumé is only one tool, once you're in the door; you're on your own.

Career Portfolios-The Latest in Career Management



In today's uncertain job market, career management has become more important than ever before. Colleges are now preparing students to enter the job market by teaching a new method of career management—called the **Career Portfolio**.

This powerful tool goes beyond just a résumé; it is an organized collection of career related items readily available for the employers review. We are slowly seeing a change where employers are giving less credibility to the résumé. This isn't to say that you should underestimate the power of a professional résumé, but employers are requiring more solid evidence of the candidate's capabilities and truthfulness through items such as a job application and actual artifacts of your talents.

Many changes are probably due to the hordes of résumés floating in the job market today, especially after massive layoffs and downsizing that took affect after 9-11 and continue due to other crisis six years later. Another cause is due to the marketability techniques taught to job seekers. A Career Portfolio can offer an edge in demonstrating the real capabilities of the candidate.

So what exactly is a Career Portfolio? Ideally it's a work in progress that consists of your career tools in a neat orderly fashion. It's as simple as a binder with a collection of all your past, present and eventually future career accolades. These can include your résumé, certificates, honors, awards, letters of achievement or accomplishment, copies of your diplomas, military awards, DD Form 214, or even emails or handwritten letters from customers or co-workers.

Have you ever had an insurance salesperson or a mortgage lender ask you to gather all your records? Remember running throughout the house opening and closing draws in search of various papers? Having your entire career items in one place and organized will keep you prepared for any planned or unplanned changes that may take place in your job.

Keep items in your portfolio up to date and action ready for the unexpected. In addition, keep it neatly organized and impressive. It will give you the confidence you need to move forward in your career progression.

I recall one time when I was applying for a bank position. I'm sure that my portfolio showing how I taught sales techniques to a group of sales representatives was one of the keys that got me to the job offer. I could never have explained my accomplishments as well as the package I shared with the interviewer.

Now is the time to start pulling together and assembling your Career Portfolio; it might be your key to landing your dream job.



Suggested Readings—Favorite Picks

*** “Think and Grow Rich” by Napoleon Hill**

This book contains money making secrets that can change your life! This book was inspired by Andrew Carnegie’s magic formula for success. Carnegie demonstrated its soundness when his coaching brought fortunes to those young men to whom he had disclosed his secret. This book will teach you the secret—and the secrets of other great men like him.

*** “The Aladdin Factor” by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen**

The Aladdin Factor helps us by pinpointing the major stumbling blocks to asking—and teaching simple techniques to overcome them. With inspirational stories about people who have succeeded by asking for what they want, this book shows us how to run our lives around—no matter what kind of obstacles we face.

*** “The Age Advantage” Making the Most of Your Midlife Career Transition” by Jean Erickson Walker, Ed.D.**

A practical and inspiring book for the mid-career job changer. If you think your age is a disadvantage, haven’t conducted a job search or written a résumé in years, this terrific book will show you how to shine a positive light on your many experiences, and sell your skills in today’s job market.

*** “The Pathfinder” How to Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction” by Nicholas Lore**

Whether you are a seasoned professional in search of a career change or a beginner just entering the working world, you want to make the right choices from the beginning. No matter where you are in your journey, if you want work to be more of a dance than a drag, The Pathfinder will expertly coach you through the process of designing a career you love.

* **“Now Discover Your Strengths” by Marcus Buckingham & Donald O. Clifton**

“A brilliant book that will help readers to discover and capitalize on their specific strengths, as well as assist managers in supervising people with varying strengths.”

**Ed Diener, PH.D., Alumni Distinguished Professor
of Psychology, University of Illinois**

* **“Do What You Are” Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type” by Paul D. Tieger & Barbara Barron-Tieger**

An introduction to Personality Type and how to discover your own. Then, using workbook exercises and explaining specific job search strategies, it lists occupations that are popular with your type, including today’s honest career tracks in growth areas.

* **“The Power of Focus” by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Les Hewitt**

Do you know the #1 reason that stops people from getting what they want? It’s Lack Of Focus. People who focus on what they want, **prosper**. Those who don’t, **struggle**. Between these covers you’ll discover the specific focusing strategies used by the world’s most successful men and women.

* **“Masters of Networking” by Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D. and Don Morgan M.A.**

Masters of networking know that gives gain—that creating, maintaining, and serving a wide network leads to great business and personal rewards. Packed with valuable insights and personal examples from many of today’s top networkers.

* **“Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting”, by Lynn Grabhorn**

In an upbeat, humorous, and somewhat irreverent style, Lynn Grabhorn introduces us to the amazing Law of Attraction, a new and rapidly unfolding realm of feelings that physicians, scientists, physicists, and theologians are coming to believe is very, very real.

* **“When Life Changes or You Wish It Would”, by Carol Adrienne, Ph.D.**

If your life is changing—or you wish it would—let Carol Adrienne help you.

*** “CALLINGS” Finding and Following an Authentic Life, by Gregg Levoy**

How do we know if we're following our true callings? How do we sharpen our senses to cut through the distractions of everyday reality and hear the calls that are beckoning us? *Callings* is the first book to examine the many kinds of calls we receive and the great variety of channels through which they come to us.

In Closing

I hope this guide has assisted you in creating better career goals and building a stronger understanding of making the most of your career tools. My intent for this guide was to be a *quick read* to get you started on your career path. There is so much more information as there is job seekers.

Your goal should be to find your own uniqueness and design a strategy that puts you above the many other candidates. Don't expect change to happen overnight. It takes patience and perseverance. Make gradual changes and they will compound faster than you think.

I've worked with many clients and the biggest problem I see is impatience. Impatience is surely a form of self-punishment. Be kind to yourself and allow yourself the time necessary to grow. After all, you have a lifetime! Prioritize which are most important now and chisel away at the others.

Overcome your job fears. As an example, for many, it's the follow-up with an interviewer after the interview or after submitting a résumé. Face the fear and make the call—you might very well be surprised from the response; and if it's a rejection, so what, you can now move on with piece of mind. Make adjustments necessary for the next time. Look at each rejection as a chance to learn and become better.

Take control of your career and your destiny; be responsible for yourself.

Again, wishing you the best *success* in your career!