

Write and Maintain a Great Executive Resume

April Allen

The executive job search is a far cry from what it used to be – faster, more automated, and almost completely online. Even with this shift to a more digital job hunt, most employers still request to see a candidate's resume before showing serious interest.

Nothing other than the resume gives a concise overview of a candidate's experience, successes, and potential. As an executive recruiter, I know the resume still matters. Rather than dismiss or downplay it, candidates should embrace it and look for ways to make it a key component of their executive future.

What follows are suggestions for improving the executive resume, based on what I've seen in my work:

Build in substance. A good resume should rely on bullet points to list essential information employers are looking for. Organizations care far less about vague summary paragraphs and far more about the finer details of your work history. But that doesn't mean to create a laundry list of job duties under each position. Employers and the recruiters who work with them want concrete examples of your past experiences, and successes, so they can gauge whether you'll be valuable to their company.

Include specific data or summaries of how you've made a difference in previous jobs. Given that the digital age has made attention spans much shorter, still be concise. Use key words and phrases that appear in the job posting as long as they truly apply to you. The good news about sending your resume digitally is that resumes of three

to five pages are common for executives who've been in their professions at least a decade or two.

Sharpen your focus. It is easier now more than ever before to find, and contact, employers. Resist the temptation to email your resume out to every HR director or CEO you can find on LinkedIn. In fact, the digital age has provided job seekers with a real gift: the ability to pinpoint your search. Research a range of companies, then focus on those that match your vision of the place you'd love to spend many of your waking hours. What's your ideal executive role? Use the web to target organizations and companies who can get you there.

Focusing your job search on fewer than a dozen organizations is most effective. Your knowledge of the organization and genuine interest in the job will make you a more appealing candidate to executive recruiters and their clients.

The homework will make it easier when it comes time to reach out. First, tweak your core document to fit the employer and open position. Craft a cover letter or email (depending on convention in your industry or directions in the position posting) that aligns with it. In your correspondence, be professional, engaging, and targeted. Don't forget to proofread (at least twice) and verify the person responsible for hiring that position before hitting the send button.

Supplement your networking and social media. The best way to network still involves eye-contact and an

old-fashioned handshake. Continue going to professional events, schedule lunches with former colleagues, and try to arrange a 20-minute chat with a visionary in your field. Always follow up, and even consider mailing a handwritten thank-you note.

Social media doesn't supplant the resume by any means, and in fact can be a great way to ensure your resume is viewed. No matter how robust your LinkedIn page, include a link to your actual resume. If you have a professional website, add your resume there as well.

Align your public information. If you have a LinkedIn page, and posted resume, and website, and belong to executive databases, keep them aligned and up-to-date as much as possible. It's one thing to post your resume to an executive job site, and another to go back a year later and refresh it.

Does your resume need a summary section? Not necessarily. Typically, hiring managers know exactly what they are looking for in a potential candidate and will have spotted it in the heart of the resume. If you do add one, keep it to a couple of sentences.

Resumes may represent tradition but they can still separate an executive candidate from the rest of the pack. Give yours the attention it deserves.

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