

# Make Your Resume Stand Out

**Rita's Career Corner ...With Rita B. Allen**

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Writing a resume is a ritualistic process that everyone has to engage in throughout their career. Learning how to do so effectively makes all the difference in opening doors for us. First, I would like to suggest that you do not wait to be in a job search to do so. **Keeping your resume current, updating it on a regular basis is a critical career management practice.** Stay sharp and on top of your recent achievements by tracking them on an on-going basis and building your portfolio. Most organizations ask for a current resume when considering internal applicants for opportunities in addition to scanning external resumes. The best time to write about an accomplishment is immediately as it occurs and the experience is fresh in your mind rather than doing so at a later date when you need to create your resume. Be proactive and diligent about keeping it current and updated.

Think of your resume as your story – it tells your history, where you've been, what you've done and the mark you left behind. It's like reading a book with several chapters and sections. Keep it interesting, enticing and appealing. You want to capture their attention, keep their attention and desire to learn more. Many times the mistake is made of writing a resume that reads more like a job description that could belong to just about anyone who was in that job. **To make your resume stand out, it is essential to make it highlight your contributions, the value you added, the accomplishments you achieved, the difference you made while you were in each role.** It tells your story; it presents a snapshot of your credentials and track record. You also want it to distinguish a well rounded picture of your background including professional associations, awards, presentations, publications, honors, interests, board and committee work as well as community activities. In addition, it's important to highlight any special skill-sets such as foreign languages, computer expertise, or other distinctive specialties. International and global experiences are highly desirable in our marketplace today and therefore should also be included.

Last but not least, each of your roles should **focus on your accomplishments rather than your responsibilities.** When possible, it is ideal to provide quantitative and qualitative metrics to highlight those accomplishments. It is also important to keep it simple and not long winded. Finding the right length is always a challenge. Generally speaking, new college graduates should keep their resumes to one page. Experienced and seasoned professionals should work to keep their resume to two to three pages maximum. Going beyond three pages is not desirable and should be avoided. It is also important to keep your resume visually appealing and make sure you use a font that is easy on the eyes and current, not out dated and plenty of white space on the paper. There are several formats to use and if you ask 10 resume professionals, honestly, you will likely get 10 different answers. My personal favorite is a chronological format that includes a brief description of each company and your role with the focus on bulleted accomplishments. I also believe it is important to include your whole history and not omit any jobs. During my years in the executive search business, I found clients did not look favorably upon an individual who left out parts of their experiences. I will go back to my book analogy – it would be like writing a book but

leaving out certain chapters. **In the end, resume writing is an art and each of us will create our own work of art and fill the canvas in a way that showcases our talents and abilities in a way that we feel reflects our best self and represents our own style.**

Employers are inundated with resumes in today's marketplace through a variety of sources both traditional and non-traditional. Social media has changed the landscape of talent acquisition and has created many new outlets and venues for finding talent. In addition, thanks to the world wide net, it's easier to find top talent who are passive and not on the job market. **All of these factors contribute to creating a highly competitive marketplace with employers having a lot of choices and a large supply of potential candidates.** More reasons why crafting and maintaining a professionally written resume that stands out apart from others is a key career management strategy for advancement both internally and externally. While we want to make our resume our own, we want to make it stand out apart from the others.

### **Strategies to Make Your Resume Stand Out:**

- Regard your resume as a vehicle for telling and showcasing your story – make it your own
- Focus on accomplishments not responsibilities – include measurable results
- Make it visually appealing – use a professional and current font with plenty of white space
- Keep it an appropriate length – be clear, concise and crisp
- Include a well-rounded, holistic picture of your background, experiences and interests
- Be sure it articulates your personal brand – how YOU differentiate yourself with specifics
- Stay away from too many buzz words while keeping your experiences relevant
- Highlight specialized skills and competencies that set you apart with examples
- View your resume as a marketing document and the commodity being marketed is YOU
- Edit and proofread several times for grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Seek feedback, input and suggestions from others
- Ask yourself the final question – would you want to meet and hire this person?

Ask Rita...

Question: I have not written my resume in several years and need to create one for a new opportunity within my current organization. As I have begun this process, I am completely overwhelmed and am considering hiring a professional resume writer to do it for me. Any suggestions on how to get started and/or if I should just reach out to a professional?

Answer: First let me say this is a process you want to engage in throughout your career so that when the time comes that you need a resume, such as now, you are already prepared and equipped to provide one. No need to worry, however, as it is never too late to start that process. I would recommend the first thing you do is take a blank sheet of paper and create headings of different buckets that represent areas of specialty for you. Next step is to think about everything you've ever accomplished under each of those buckets and add them as bullets. Once you have completed this assignment, you should have a full page of achievements that you can draw from to create your resume. I believe each of us is the best person to write our own resume and even the act of doing so is empowering us to own our careers. The process itself will prepare you to be ready to market yourself effectively and passionately. Having said that, there are incredibly talented professionals out there who can help – either a career coach or a professional resume writer, but be sure to take the lead and challenge yourself rather than avoid it. Once you have your resume created, maintain it regularly by updating and keeping it current. This will enable you to not only be prepared when opportunities present themselves but to be proactively keep your portfolio and track record current. It also helps to enhance your confidence along the way. Best of luck!

*Rita Balian Allen is the President of Rita B. Allen Associates, a provider of career management/talent management consulting and executive coaching services located in Waltham at [www.ritaballenassociates.com](http://www.ritaballenassociates.com) and the President of ACPI – NE (Association of Career Professionals International – New England), [www.acpi-ne.org](http://www.acpi-ne.org)*