

Resume Writing for Accounting & Finance Professionals

The reality of today's employment market is that there are too many resumes submitted for most job openings. This means that in order for your resume to have a chance of being reviewed by the hiring authority it must first pass through a "Resume Gatekeeper". The gatekeeper can be as simple as resume scanning software or a member of Human Resources.

How do you improve your chances of making it through a Resume Gatekeeper? The quick answer is "Know Your Audience". The Resume Gatekeeper will look for keywords and job criteria (such as certain software experience, industry experience, revenue/size of your previous employers, certifications, specific expertise such as 10K, 10Q, SOX, FIN 48 or other keywords); career progression and proper formatting and grammar.

Helpful Tips

Writing or updating your resume requires significant planning and research. There are many resources available on the Internet to help you format and write an outstanding resume. A well-written and formatted resume will help you to get past the gatekeeper and move to an interview with the ultimate hiring authority. The following are specific tips for accounting/finance professionals as you look to write or update your resume.

- The chronological resume is still the resume format preferred by hiring authorities. It is ideal for candidates who have a substantial employment history and relevant work experience with no large gaps between jobs.
- Keywords are important. Tailor your resume to reflect your experience with keywords that a Resume Gatekeeper and hiring authority will be looking for. For example, if you are applying for a Revenue Manager position with a software company, note your experience with SOP 97.2.
- Use bullets and limit the use of paragraphs. Bullets are easier to read and are visually effective.
- Quantify your accomplishments. If you reduced the DSO for Accounts Receivable, quantify your accomplishment instead of just saying you reduced the DSO. For example, "reduced the DSO from 46 days to 32 days" or "reduced the over 90 day A/R from \$750,000 to \$400,000 in the first 6 months".
- Work history for the last 10 years must include the month employment changed. Leaving out dates or month started and ended leads to questions about possible gaps in employment.
- When listing your employment history, be sure to note the industry, size and whether the companies you worked for were public or private. For example: ABC, Company, Any City, USA (\$250M, privately held software company). This makes it easier for the reader to compare your work history with their needs.

- Be sure to include software used (SAP, Oracle, Hyperion, QuickBooks etc.) in the body of the resume as well as in a summary section of Software Skills. For example: “Drove the month-end process utilizing Oracle 11i”
- Companies and organizations are constantly looking for ways to save time and do things more efficiently. Your ability to showcase these types of accomplishments is important. For example: “Reduced the month-end close process from 8 days to 5 days”
- When developing your resume, focus on skills, areas of expertise, certifications and specific accomplishments.
- Select a clean and easy-to-scan accounting or finance resume format, making good use of the white space on the page without crowding all of the content into a tiny, unreadable font. Make your resume easy to read by adhering to one font and punctuate the accomplishment-filled resume with bolded section headings and bulleted lists. Keep type size consistent throughout the accounting resume format.
- It is crucial your strengths and key accomplishments are summarized within the top half of the first page of your resume. For example:

Profile – Chief Financial Officer with 15 years of corporate accounting and management experience. Hands-on manager with expertise in accounting systems development, fiscal management and financial reporting. Proven record of developing and implementing financial and operational controls that improve P&L scenario and competitively position firm.

- Follow your Profile section with an Areas of Expertise section containing a listing of keywords pertinent to your career choice. The above Profile might have an Areas of Expertise section as follows:
 - Financial and strategic planning
 - P&L management
 - Auditing and compliance
 - Operating and working capital
 - Budget development and management
 - Merger and acquisition negotiations
 - Cash flow management and modeling
 - Business valuations
- Other possible keywords to include in your resume: job titles, SAP, GAAP, IFRS, SOX, SEC Reporting, A/P, A/R, cost accounting, CPA, CFA, MBA, MS Excel, bank reconciliations, Crystal Reports, Hyperion, spreadsheets etc.
- **Do not** include a Personal Interests section at the end of your resume.

- If your career spans more than 25 years, consider starting your first job in the experience section with your employer of 15 to 20 years ago. Most clients focus on your experience during the last 10 to 15 years.
- In the Education section, do not include year of graduation. Be sure to include your major and GPA, if with distinction (cum laude etc.). If you have a Economics degree, for example, but minored in accounting, list your minor.

Common Resume Blunders

- Too focused on job duties – Prospective employers want to see accomplishments, what makes you an A-level candidate and specific examples of how previous employers benefited from your performance.
- An Objective statement that is too general - An example of a poor Objective statement is “A challenging position that will enable me to contribute to organizational goals while offering an opportunity for growth and advancement”. If you are on a career track, consider replacing the objective with a tag line, which is a statement of what you do or what your area of specialty is.
- Too short or too long a resume – Too many candidates try to squeeze their experience onto one page because they have heard that a resume should never be longer than one page. When formatting a resume on one page, many job seekers delete their most impressive achievements. The reverse is also true. Take the candidate who rambles on and on for pages about irrelevant or redundant experiences – the reader will easily be bored. The key when writing your resume is to ask yourself, “Will this statement help me land an interview?” Only include information that elicits the answer “Yes” to that question.
- Misuse of personal pronouns (“I” and “me”) and articles (“an” and “the”) - A resume is a form of business communication and should be concise and written in a telegraphic style. There should not be any mention of “I” or “me” and minimal use of articles. Here is an example:

The statement: I developed a new auditing procedure that reduced the auditing expenses by 10%.

Should be changed to: Developed new auditing procedure that reduced auditing expenses by 10%.

Most people write a resume because everyone knows that you have to have one to get a job. Often times, resumes are written out of obligation. In reality, a resume is an advertisement, a tool with one specific purpose – to win an interview.