

PREPARING A RESUME — THE PERSONAL ADVANCE CAMPAIGNER

How many resumes — unsolicited, requested or otherwise — cross your desk in a year? More than a few, I'd guess. And how many have you prepared as you've advanced your career — one, two or ten? A friend of mine who recently changed golf courses told me that the resume which earned him his first interview (but no job) barely resembled the one submitted to the club that eventually hired him. Fortunately, he was able to refine his resume after each job interview and the job he landed was the best of those he interviewed for. But how unfortunate it would have been if he hadn't even gained an interview with his eventual employer, because of his weak resume.

A resume is the obvious way for anyone to put their best foot forward when looking for a job. It seems incredible that so many of the resumes I see are so poorly prepared. A document that begs attention from a prospective employer, in hopes for a job interview, should be prepared with more care and thought. Too many seem to be written as if no one is going to read them! It is a crucial mistake in the job seeking process.

Too many job seekers compose a resume that is cumbersome and wordy. Brevity should be the guide since the basic purpose of a resume is to offer a custom made advertisement — clarifying goals, explaining accomplishments and hopefully moving an employer toward an interview. It is important to give the hiring authority a clear view of what you are trying to say.

This point is simplified by studies that show most employers only spend an average of 17 seconds on a resume before deciding its fate — more consideration or the wastebasket. These studies show that the official will read the first few inches below the name with some care, but merely skim the rest of the page. This should be a clue on

placement of what you want a prospective employer to read.

An interesting situation in our profession (and others too, most likely) occasionally crops up — there may be part(s) of your work record you'd rather not explain or draw attention to. These might be periods of underemployment or unemployment, or a period of frequent job changes. Inclusion of aberrations like these may result in a resume that is counterproductive; it becomes an enemy rather than a friend. The key to avoiding this situation is your attitude toward a resume. It is **not** a biography of your ups and downs in the marketplace; rather, it is a summary of your qualifications for a certain position. A properly written and well prepared resume will show how you have prepared for the future and **not** how you may have muddled through the past.

There are many resume styles, but two formats seem to be used most frequently. The **functional** format is one that places emphasis on skills and experience. The **chronological** format tracks your career from most recent employment, back into time. Most corporate executives use the chronological format simply because they are most familiar with it and because they are convinced it does the best job of showing one's individual qualifications, achievements, promotion record and career direction. This resume style can show a steady, progressive and responsible work history.

The functional resume is best suited to those people that have a spotty work record or for those who are making a drastic career change. It stresses your base of experience and professional growth, but sacrifices details of how, where and when you earned it. These may be the very details you want to avoid. The obvious catches to the functional format is employer awareness of this style and the suspicion aroused in him. Many consultants recommend using the functional **only** when a chronological resume would likely kill any chance for an interview.

Careful construction of a chronological resume, even in the face of a career setback, can lead to a job interview. For example, if employment in several short periods of time is viewed negatively, it can be overcome to a large ex-

tent by **not** stressing dates of employment. Don't put the dates of employment out in the left margin where they stick out like a sore thumb. If you want to overcome an impression of job hopping, place these dates in an inconspicuous place at the end of a paragraph.

Another key feature of a good resume is describing how each job move prepared you for increasing responsibility and how it was a move up from the previous position. If you fear you've been on a downward spiral with recent moves, pinpoint the experience in each position that best qualifies you for the new position you want. A perfect example would be a Golf Course Superintendent who, although at a lower budget golf course, has provided superb quality putting greens. Emphasize this key point and don't worry that the fairways may have been unwatered Kentucky Bluegrass. The prospective employer may be looking for that one person with abilities to upgrade and improve the club's putting surfaces, and emphasis on your success in this culture may net you the interview. Give only brief treatment to a job that you feel might have been somewhat of a reversal in your career, and give extended coverage to those more important positions you've held.

A major concern for some individuals, regardless of their profession, is deciding how to handle a disastrous job experience. There are many ways to deal with it, depending on how long ago it happened, how important or pertinent it is to your present goal and how big a gap it would leave if you de-emphasized it. A couple of more logical ways are reducing it to a single line; e.g., "Further experience in golf course management — 1980," or omitting it entirely unless it is your current position.

Every resume has numerous other dilemmas to face up to. Some of them are:

THE OBJECTIVE: Some personnel managers believe that spelling out your objective reveals the applicant's goals or sense of direction. They feel it should be broad enough to include closely related positions but not so vague as to give the impression you'll take anything. A possibility is to tailor the objective to each job you seek. Other executives feel it is wasted

space; they skip it and move right down the page. There seems no clear-cut consensus on this one.

PERSONAL DATA: This feature of resumes also seems a toss-up. On the one hand you might be fortunate enough to hit a responsive chord with the person(s) reviewing the resumes for a job and precipitate a conclusion that you are a well-rounded individual. Likewise, your activities or marital status could provoke a prejudicial response that will, fairly or unfairly, put you at a disadvantage to others who simply left the information off their resumes. Can you imagine a die-hard animal lover reading from your resume that you are a die-hard hunter?!

PHOTO: Very little debate here. The overwhelming opinion is leave it out. Pictures can create bias and employers will insist they never hire on the basis of appearance anyway.

REFERENCES: Believe it or not, there is a split of opinion here. A surprising number of personnel managers and executives feel you don't need to list your references and even recommend leaving out the line, "References available on request." It is assumed by these people that any applicant can supply references, so why waste the space. If there is an exception it would be the resume sent with an application for a job in the public (government) sector.

RESUME LENGTH: Again, no clear-cut consensus on this one. Most opinions, however, say not more than two pages. If you've been in the golf course business for a long time you might want to drop your earliest experiences from your resume or at least condense them into a few lines or a short paragraph. Some personnel people strongly favor the one-page resume for almost every situation, saying that the second page is seldom read anyway.

ATTENTION GETTERS: A common question for those preparing a resume is, "How far should I go to make it stand out from the rest?" The answer depends on how well you know the club or company and the probable reaction to any of your "creativity." One consultant feels resumes should not try to be modern art, and others expand that thought with the recommendation that resumes be professional and sophisticated. There are major dif-

ferences between an ad firm or PR company and a business in the turfgrass industry. What may be viewed as original or creative to an advertising professional may be viewed as silly and irritating to a club president. Another common suggestion to give your resume a subtle difference is to print it on heavier paper — it can give a unique and crisp appearance.

Many experts agree that the cover letter is important and needs careful consideration. It is too often not given enough attention and this chance for a resume to stand out among the rest has been missed. I personally give the cover letter of the resumes I receive nearly as much time as the resume itself. It gives a good idea of the applicant's communication skill and shows the applicant has given careful thought to a specific position, in contrast to the individual who has sent out hundreds of the same resume.

Always proof read your resume carefully — typographical errors, sloppy looks and mistakes in grammar can be disastrous. Right or wrong, those kinds of oversights can be more costly than any lack of experience. It's probably a wise idea to let someone who isn't at all familiar with your resume read it — such people can lend constructive objectivity.

It can be helpful to include accomplishments that go beyond basic golf course maintenance responsibilities — the construction of nine new golf holes, the execution of a master plan, renovation of fairways, successful conversion to bentgrass greens, to cite a few specific examples. Many employers are also interested in your activities outside the job. Things like involvement in community government, achievements in professional organizations and activity in charitable groups all give an indication of the total person they are considering.

For those who view the task of resume preparation as overwhelming, there is outside help available. Most mid-sized communities have resume writing and consulting companies that can give help and expert opinion in composing cover letters, resumes and printing. Depending on the amount of service you'll require, including personal interviews, the costs will range from \$30 to \$100.

As one person involved in resume review pointed out, the hope and the curse of them is there is no one way guaranteed to create a sure-fire winner. You must do what you feel comfortable with and what is appropriate for your prospective employer.

Monroe S. Miller

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