CREATING RESUMES THAT GET YOU INTERVIEWS

In today's competitive job market, a well-written resume is critical to landing that new job. Initially, your resume is often the only means you have to influence hiring managers to select you for an interview. Once selected, your resume becomes the critical piece of paper that is reviewed by all during the interviewing process and provides you with a coherent and structured means to communicate your skills and experience. And when you leave the company, it is the only piece of paper that remains behind that the decision makers can refer back to, during the selection process, to refresh their memories and compare data on candidates. All these reasons only underscore the importance of having an outstanding resume. Engineering managers and Human Resource personnel probably review anywhere from 100 to 200 resumes in a year in response to job postings. To impress these people you will need a resume that is well-structured, easy to read, clear of typos, and full of vital career information. In this chapter, we will review the general structure of resumes, how to write impressive resumes in less time, and how you can power-charge the information you present in your resume so that you stand out from the rest of the applicants. As shown in Figure 39-1 creating resumes is the next step in the process.

GENERAL FORMAT AND LAYOUT OF A RESUME

The general format of a resume is shown in Figure 39-2. At the top center in large print is your name and contact information. Directly below your contact information is your objectives statement or career highlights section. This area on the resume is the single most important area. It is the areas that interviewers go to first, and after reading, usually form an opinion about the candidate.
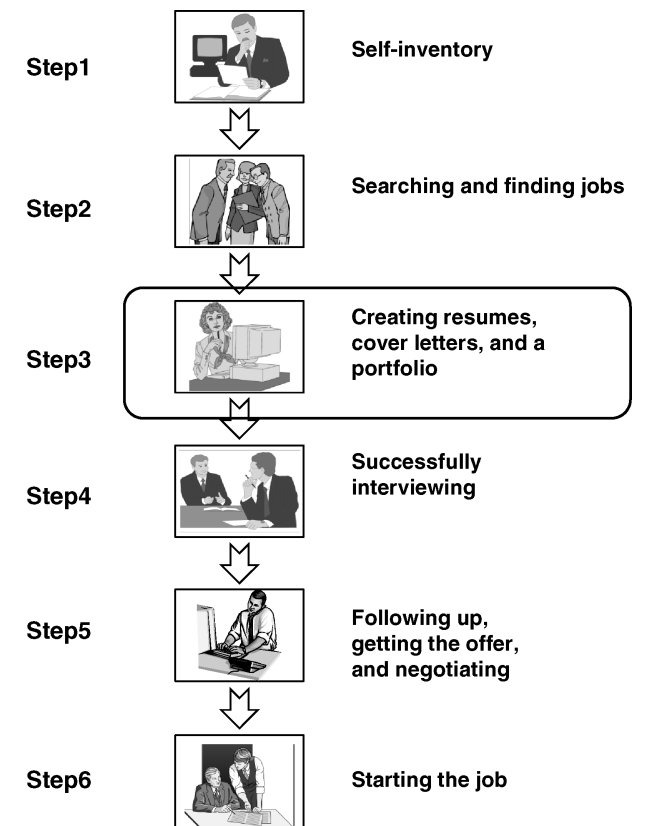
Step1 — Self-inventory

Step2 — Searching and finding jobs

Step3 — Creating resumes, cover letters, and a portfolio

Step4 — Successfully interviewing

Step5 — Following up, getting the offer, and negotiating

Step6 — Starting the job

FIGURE 39-1 Job search process step 3—creating resumes.

General Format of a Resume

Contact information

Highest importance area — Objective statement or career highlights section customized to job ad and desired skills

Body mid-importance — Chronological or skills format with emphasis on technical and leadership skills. Highlight major accomplishments. Customized to job ad and desired skills

Lower importance area — Reserved for awards, patents, papers, hobbies, etc. HR focus activities that show people skills
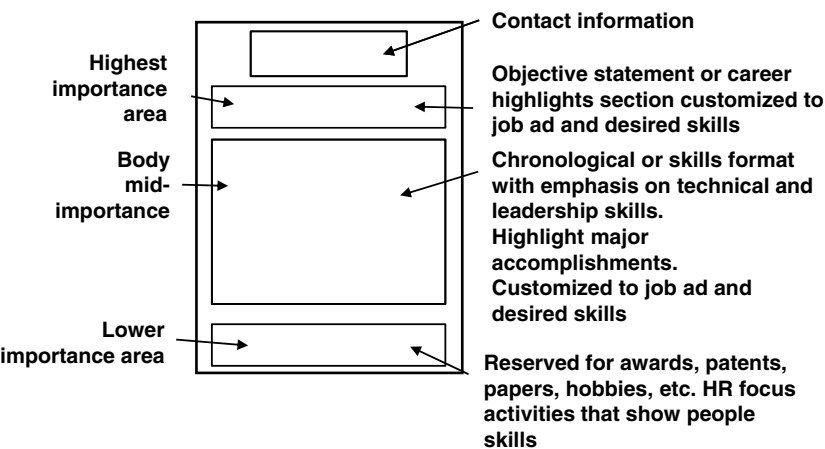
FIGURE 39-2 General format of a resume.

The Objectives or Career Highlights Section. This should be a clear concise statement of your objectives with emphasis on how they relate to the company and the job position you are interviewing for. Please do not write "seeking a position that will allow me to utilize my skills for the benefit of the company." Instead, mention the company and specific skills as identified in the job ad. For instance, if you are writing an objectives statement for a job position with Microsoft you might write something like:

> Seeking a software engineering manager position in Microsoft's Seattle Research group developing advanced Internet search engines. A position that can benefit from my 20 years experience of conducting research on the theory of search engines development for MIT, Stanford, and DARPA labs, along with my award-winning managerial skills.

If you are writing a career highlights statement rather than an objectives statement, you might write something like:

> Award-winning software department manager with 20 years experience in the research and development of advanced software search engines for MIT, Stanford, and DARPA. Research lead to $150M worth of grants and receiving DARPA's highest award for innovative research.

The purpose of the objectives statement is to get the reader excited and interested in reading the rest of the resume.

Body of the Resume. The next section below the objectives statement is the body of the resume. The body of the resume can be arranged in a chronological or skills format. The emphasis of this section should be technical skills and leadership skills if applicable. Here is where you highlight your major accomplishments that you identified when doing your self-inventory. The technical skills and capabilities should reflect the same terminology as used in the job ad.

As shown in Figure 39-3, the body of the resume can be either arranged in a chronological format or skills format. It is best to use a chronological format when you are interviewing with people who are familiar with your present company, its products, or projects. List your jobs starting with the most recent and working back in time. A chronological format resume should emphasize the growth and development in your career over the years.

For each significant job assignment or employer clearly indicate the company name, your position, and the dates of your employment. Provide a brief overview statement that tells information about what the company does, its products, and customers. This will help the reviewer assess your technical skills and experience. Follow this by a concise power-packed statement on exactly what you did for the company. Don't make the reviewer look for the information or read between the lines. State the obvious. If the reviewer has to interpret or read between the lines, more than likely your resume will go to the reject pile.
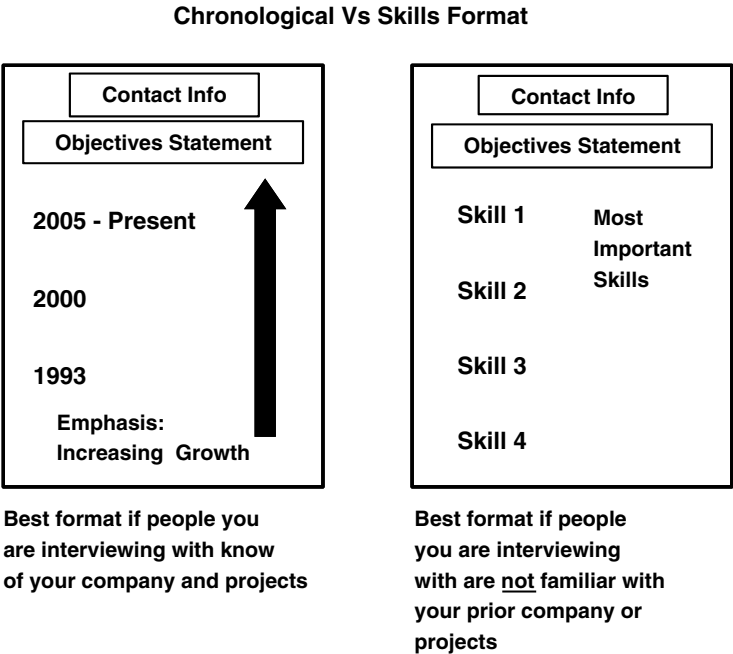
Chronological Vs Skills Format

FIGURE 39-3   General resume formats for chronological versus skills format.

The skills format is best when you are interviewing with people who are NOT familiar with your present company or its products. The strategy is to list skills that are directly transferable to the new job rather than discuss projects or programs you worked on. For this format, you list the most important skill first followed by skills that are decreasing in value but necessary for the job.

Bottom Portion of the Resume. The bottom of the resume is usually the last thing read and the lowest value material. This area is reserved for other information like awards, patents, papers, hobbies, and other nontechnical accomplishments that reveal interesting and pertinent items about you.

One Page or Two Pages. The general rule is, for recently graduated engineers or junior engineers, a one-page resume should suffice. For more senior engineers a two-page resume is normally expected.

HOW TO WRITE AN IMPRESSIVE RESUME IN LESS TIME

The process for writing an impressive resume in less time is shown in Figure 39-4. The process starts with the job ad. Your objective is to write a resume direct to the job ad. Your goal is to finish with a resume that sounds like it is the perfect fit for the job. Take the job ad and read it several times. Then circle all the keywords in the description. The more times you use these keywords in your resume the better.

In fact, some companies will run your resume through special software to count the number of matches between the ad and your resume. Based on the
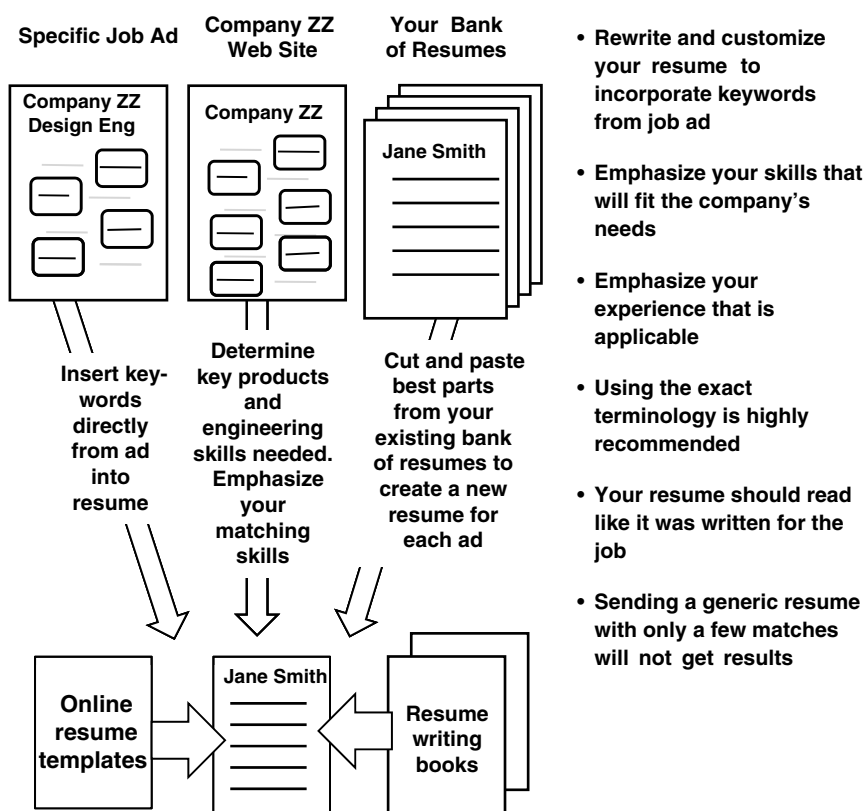
Creating Your Resume

Specific Job Ad	Company ZZ Web Site	Your Bank of Resumes

Company ZZ Design Eng

Company ZZ

Jane Smith

Insert key-words directly from ad into resume	Determine key products and engineering skills needed. Emphasize your matching skills	Cut and paste best parts from your existing bank of resumes to create a new resume for each ad

- Rewrite and customize your resume to incorporate keywords from job ad

- Emphasize your skills that will fit the company's needs

- Emphasize your experience that is applicable

- Using the exact terminology is highly recommended

- Your resume should read like it was written for the job

- Sending a generic resume with only a few matches will not get results

Online resume templates	Jane Smith	Resume writing books

FIGURE 39-4   Creating your resume.

number of matches they count for your resume, they will either accept or reject your resume.

▶ *Career Tip.* Read the job ad and identify keywords. Then make sure you use these keywords multiple times in your resume.

Next, visit the company website and learn everything you can about their products, technology, and engineering skills required. If you have worked on similar products and technology then emphasis this on resume.

Next look at your inventory and previous resumes you have written. You should be able, in a matter of minutes, to cut and paste sections of previous resumes into your new resume and edit these to make sure your best skills from the inventory are included. The draft resume should only take a few minutes to complete. Go online and review the templates that are free for your use [1–3]. Finally, visit a library or bookstore and read the excellent books and articles on writing resumes [4–7]. When you have done all this, writing a resume should be a whole lot easier. Now onto power-packing your resume.

QUANTIFY, RELATE, AND SELL YOURSELF

You can create a power-charged resume that should get you interviews and hopefully a job offer by quantifying, relating, and selling yourself on the resume. The best way to do this is to sell your benefits and not list your features. This is the old story that people buy benefits and not features. To illustrate the point let's consider a new car salesperson who simply informs you about a car that you are interested in by going through a list of its features. For instance, the salesperson would say the car has four wheels of 16-inch diameter and tire pressure of 32 PSI. The wheel base is 75 inch by 108 inch and the inside compartment has 32 cubic feet of space. The car has a six-cylinder engine and runs on regular gas. This does nothing to motivate the customer to buy.

Now contrast this when the salesperson quantifies, relates, and sells the benefits of all these features. To sell benefits, the salesperson might say something like, "our car has the largest wheel base made giving it the smoothest ride on the road, the tires are specially designed for a smooth ride, better mileage, and improved traction in rain and snow. The interior is very roomy and will make it comfortable for a 6-foot tall man to drive. The engine is the highest efficiency six-cylinder made and also provides the power needed to safely pass other cars on the freeway. You will look awesome driving, it and be happy with our guaranteed, no-hassle warranty for 100,000 miles."

Which sales pitch are you more likely to want to buy? People buy benefits and that's what the company you are interviewing with wants to buy. The benefits for them in hiring you are most on their mind, not the features.

Now let's illustrate how to power-charge your resume. Here is a sample sentence taken from an engineer's resume from a chronological resume.

> Lead engineer on the XYZ Project working on digital electronics for our products.

And here is what you can to do to power-charge this by quantifying, relating, and selling yourself.

> Lead engineer on the successful XYZ Project overseeing and directing the efforts of a 40-person team including mechanical, electrical, and software engineers. Reported directly to the Vice President of Engineering and lead customer interface. Produced state-of-the-art digital controller in 6 months, 1 month ahead of plan, and 20% under cost. Project resulted in highest company award.

Here is a sample sentence taken from an engineer's resume from a skills resume.

> Skills—digital designer for FPGA and ASIC devices.

And here is what you can to do to power-charge this by quantifying, relating, and selling your skills.

> Superior Digital Design Skills. Lead engineer for digital design of state-of-the-art 4 million gate Actel FPGA. The design was completed in 4 months and successfully tested in 2 months. FPGA design ported to ASIC and presently in production of 10 million units. Utilized latest Mentor Graphic tools for modeling and Lab View Software for testing. Design has built-in testability and error correction capabilities. Customer presented highest company award to team.

For each of these examples you can see the power-charged second statement significantly improves the saleability of the engineer for the job. One of the keys to power-charge your resume is using action words and verbs. This brings us to our next section.

GREAT ACTION WORDS TO INCLUDE ON YOUR RESUME

Accelerated	Collected	Demonstrated
Accomplished	Completed	Designed
Acquired	Computed	Determined
Achieved	Conceptualized	Developed
Adapted	Concluded	Devised
Advised	Condensed	Diagnosed
Analyzed	Conducted	Directed
Apply	Conferred	Enforced
Appraised	Configured	Engineer
Approved	Connected	Enhanced
Arranged	Conserved	Ensured
Assemble	Consolidated	Established
Assess	Constructed	Estimated
Assign	Consulted	Evaluated
Assisted	Contributed	Examined
Attained	Controlled	Executed
Authorized	Converted	Expanded
Awarded	Coordinated	Expedited
Budget	Counseled	Fabricated
Built	Cultivated	Facilitated
Certified	Customize	Finance
Chaired	Dedicated	Focus
Changed	Defined	Forecast
Coached	Delegated	Formulated
Collaborated	Delivered	Funds

Furnish
Gained
Generated
Graduated
Handled
Helped
Identified
Illustrate
Implemented
Improved
Increased
Influenced
Informed
Initiated
Inspired
Installed
Integrated
Interacted
Introduced
Investigated
Launched
Led
Maintained
Managed
Mediated
Merged
Mobilized
Modified
Motivated
Negotiated
Obtained
Operated
Ordered
Organized
Outpaced

Outperformed
Participated
Performed
Plan
Prepared
Presented
Prevented
Process
Produced
Program
Promoted
Proposed
Prospect
Proved
Provided
Publicized
Purchased
Pursued
Qualified
Received
Recommended
Reconciled
Record
Recruited
Reduced
Refocus
Regulated
Reorganized
Repaired
Replaced
Report
Represented
Research
Resolved
Restored

Restructured
Retrieved
Reviewed
Revised
Revitalized
Schedule
Screened
Served
Showcase
Simplified
Solved
Specialize
Specify
Sponsored
Staff
Standardize
Started
Succeeded
Supervised
Supported
Surpassed
Sustained
Tested
Tracked
Transformed
Translated
United
Updated
Upgraded
Used
Utilized
Validated
Value
Verified
Volunteered

RESUME MISTAKES TO AVOID

Typos. You will likely grow tired of hearing this, but correct spelling, appropriate grammar, no missing words, and no typing mistakes, make your resume an employer-pleaser right out of the starting gate. An error-free resume is rare. Indeed, some hiring managers will not consider your candidacy further if they find even one mistake. Every mistake makes me pause

and think. Every mistake makes me question your carefulness, care, and attention to detail. Don't make me pause; don't make me think.

Large Gaps in Employment. The first scan of a chronological resume will reveal gaps in the job searcher's employment history and these are red flags indicating potential problems with the candidate. If you have significant periods of unemployment usually greater than 3 months, then you better be prepared to discuss this.

Problems with Grammar and Sentence Construction. If the resume is poorly written with mistakes, this is a bad indication especially since most computers can now instantly check spelling and even recommend grammar changes. Have others review your resume before you send it to any companies.

Wild Formats. Some people are tempted to use wild formats and fonts to attract attention to their resume in hopes they will be noticed. For most engineering hiring managers this is a danger sign and not looked at favorably. The safest thing to do is stick with the standard format and commonly used fonts.

Special Note on Resume Formats. Some people will work for hours and days trying to get the best format and font for their resume. This can be wasted effort in some cases. With online resume submittal and new software programs, the resumes are automatically reformatted when loaded into a company website and often converted to unformatted text to run through a comparator program. So before you spend all the time formatting your resume to make it look perfect, check and see what the requirements are for submittal.

Also, the type of software you use to create your resume may be not be compatible with the hiring company's software; when they open your resume file all the special formatting is lost. Sometimes, the resume format is changed to the point it is almost unreadable. The best way to prevent this is submitting your resume in PDF format. However, not all companies can handle PDF files, so again, the best thing to do is check with the company on the file format they require before submitting your resume.

WHAT THE INTERVIEWERS WILL BE LOOKING FOR IN YOUR RESUME

In most corporations the Human Resource department will do a first pass of the resumes received and eliminate those that do not meet the minimum requirements for the job. They will be checking to see if the candidate has the number of years of experience and correct engineering degree. Next, they may do a comparison of the resume to the job description by doing a word search to find out how many matches there are between the job description and the resume. If your resume passes this, then it is usually forwarded to the engineering manager doing the hiring.

The engineering manager may sort through the resumes or distribute them to a team of engineers and have the team give their opinion as to which

engineers they should ask to come in for an interview. Once the final selections are made, the candidates are contacted and interviews set up. Those not selected usually receive a postcard or email rejection notice.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RESUMES

Should I Include a Picture? The jury is still out on this one. Some hiring managers and personnel like to see a picture of the person and others couldn't care less. A picture can help and can hurt, so use caution when considering putting your picture on your resume.

Should I Put My Education and Degrees First? Yes, for junior engineers since this is usually one of the first criteria hiring managers look for.

How Do I De-Emphasize My Age? There are two problems with age. Being too old and being too young for the position. If you feel you are too old you can de-emphasize your age in two ways. One, do not put the year you received your degree and also do not put the years you worked at each job.

If they are looking for a younger person since it is a lower level job, and you might be overqualified, you can play up your experience as a real benefit since you will not be getting paid any more but they will be gaining a person with vastly more experience. It is thought that older workers are more dependable and are not likely to leave on a moment's notice. Older workers are generally more settled down.

If you are younger than they expected then you need to emphasize all the energy and enthusiasm you bring to the job. You have boundless energy and willing to put in all the extra effort needed to make up for being young.

Should It Be One or Two Pages Long? For junior engineers or recent graduates one page is best. For senior engineers, two pages is a must.

Should I Put in Hobbies? Yes, it looks good on the resume but keep it to one line maximum at the end of the resume.

What Word Processing Program Should I Use? The program and version used by the hiring company is usually the best or submit your resume in PDF format.

What If They Want you to Fill Out an Online Resume Form? This is the way most companies are going with their efforts to go paperless and return to green. The best thing to do is to always have an electronic copy of your resume at all times, and simply cut and paste it into the companies' online system if possible.

Should I Use a Resume Writing Service? Only if you feel you are totally incapable of writing it yourself. There are excellent resume writing companies easily found online [8–11]. You might want to contact local companies just in case you need to visit them for in-person help. Remember, for best results you need to modify your resume to match each job ad. If the resume writing service charges you for modifications it could end up costing you a lot of money.

SUMMARY

In today's competitive job market, a well-written resume is critical to landing that new job. To impress people you will need a resume that is well-structured, easy to read, clear of typos, and full of vital career information. There is a generally accepted format for resumes, with your name and contact information at the top and your objective statement directly below. The main body of the resume follows this. The most commonly used formats for resumes are chronological and skills. You can create a power-charged resume that should get you interviews and hopefully a job offer by quantifying, relating, and selling yourself on the resume. The best way to do this is to sell your benefits. Action words are the best way to power-charge your resume, so, use them often. Always triple check your resume for spelling and grammatical errors before submitting since these are so easily avoidable. Finally, create your resume while looking at the job ad and use the keywords of the ad in your resume as much as you can. Tailor each resume to the specific job you are applying for.

If you would like further information on resume writing the best place to go is your local bookstore, library, or conduct an online search using the words "resume writing."

Have you identified any career actions you want to take as a result of reading this chapter? If so, please make sure to capture these ideas before you forget by recording them in the notes section at the back of the book.

ASSIGNMENTS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

1 Why is having an impressive resume so important?
2 Describe the general format of a resume.
3 What are the differences between a chronological and skills format resumes?
4 What is the difference between benefits and features?
5 What precautions should you take when submitting a resume online?
6 Write your objective statement.
7 How do you quantify, relate, and sell your skills? Give examples.

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