

Writing Resumes

Simplified guide to effective resumes

- **Basic information to creating your most effective resume**
- **Tips and hints**
- **Converting your military experience to civilian employment needs**

Writing Resumes

What you need to know to translate your military skills to the civilian workforce

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One of the most important parts of a job or career search is the resume, and yet, it is the one area that tends to confuse people. One reason is that all of the so-called experts offer advice and opinions that go all over the place. For instance, one expert says to flaunt your military experience, while another suggests that you play it down. How do you know what to do?

I'm no expert (and I didn't stay at a Holiday Inn Express last night!), but I have been involved with staffing for many years. So, we have prepared a series of documents that will simply offer good, sound, basic advice, and allow you to decide for yourself what will work best. Not only do you know your situation and circumstances better than anyone, but you have come from a highly disciplined and structured experience. Just use your common sense.

Before we get started, let me go over some basics of resumes. These are general concepts that are commonly recognized in the employment world, and will give you some valuable ammunition as you proceed through this process.

What is a resume, and what is its purpose? Simply put, a resume is a document that allows you to describe your experience and background. Some say that it is a self-promoting document, and others refer to it as a marketing piece. The purpose of the resume is not to get you the job, but rather to get the employer interested enough to invite you to a job interview.

One key point is that you should never stretch the truth, or omit important details. If you do, and the company checks references or other background information, your job offer (if given) will be revoked. Also, gaps in employment should be explained as best as you can. We will go over later how to group them if you have had several part time or short term jobs.

A resume isn't just about past employment, it's about you, and how you performed your job. You need to list the pertinent accomplishments, making sure that they are related to your job search. Keep in mind that many of your accomplishments may be very exciting to you, but put yourself in a stranger's shoes, and decide if that information is appropriate.

There are a few other minor points, and then we get into the good stuff! You may be proud of the fact that you have the world's largest rubber band ball, but prospective employers really won't care, unless you are going to work for an office supply company. Don't list your hobbies unless they are directly related to your possible employment. Also, don't include any religious or political information. If your name is not gender-specific, such as Kim, Robin, Lee, or Pat, use a Mr. Or Ms. prefix. Finally, don't waste the cost of printing your resume on fancy paper. If you are going for a graphic design position, then you should showcase your talents, but keep it tasteful.

Now, let's get started...

Preparation

First of all, don't rush this. This paper will offer ideas on how to build your resume, step by step, as well as special tips and hints. Many of the things you will do to create your resume will be useful later for your interview. Even before you decide on a format to use, you need to collect all of the information and details you will need. Start off by making a list of your work experience and the dates. We will add the details about performance and accomplishments later.

Writing the Objective

The next step is to write the initial paragraph that will tell the employer what your objective is. This should be very brief, and not filled with "fluff." You can find many examples online (use our links in the Resource Center on www.PatriotsGroup.com for sites offering job assistance), but start out with something like:

Objective

To find a position in Information Technology that will allow me to use my extensive experience in Data Networking.

That's as much information as the employer will want to see. You have to remember that some of the people that have to review all of the resumes for various positions have to go through dozens and even hundreds of documents. They will appreciate the brevity.

You also don't want to limit yourself by making statements such as you are looking for a position with a "fast-paced" company, or even refer to the size of the company. You can decide if you like the pace and size if they invite you to an interview.

Choosing a Format

Resumes come in three basic formats; chronological, functional, and a combination of both. Coming from the military, and not having an extensive civilian work history, I would suggest the functional or a combination, because it will emphasize your specific background and experience.

Chronological

The chronological format is the one that most people are familiar with. Your work experience is listed in reverse chronological order, with the most recent job first.

What do employers really want?

This is one of the most asked questions from job seekers. Don't worry, you don't need to possess all of these traits, but keep them in mind as you build your resume, and even as you prepare for an interview.

1. ***Willingness to share information and ideas***
2. ***Commitment to teamwork***
3. ***Responsiveness to change***
4. ***Ability to work under pressure***
5. ***Sense of ownership of work and ideas***
6. ***Willingness to take calculated risks, without fear of consequences***
7. ***Multicultural experience and/or ability to speak multiple languages***
8. ***Ability to communicate clearly and honestly with peers, managers, and customers***
9. ***Understanding of business strategy and direction***
10. ***Commitment to continuous learning, skill development***

Short and sweet...

Keep information brief and right to the point. Too much information is not helpful, because the person reading your resume will only need the information that will spark their interest.

Accentuate the positives...

Previous evaluations, awards, and honors are very powerful in telling your story to a prospective employer. No other group in the world does evaluations like the military! Use that to your advantage.

Don't use abbreviations...

Since your potential employer may not have been in the military, using abbreviations and acronyms will only confuse them. Whenever possible, use groupings and general descriptions rather than initials.

Transfer your skills...

*Remember that civilian employers may not appreciate your skills and abilities, because sometimes things get lost in the translation. Go to the Careers section found on www.Military.com and use the **MOS Decoder**, also called the **Skills Translator**, to help you get the proper wording.*

Cover letter...

While not critical, a cover letter can set the tone for what is to follow, namely your resume. When these are done electronically, either by direct online submission, or as an email with the resume attached, keep in mind that many of the people that will read your resume might not even see your cover letter. Keep it brief and to the point. Don't be afraid to make a request for a follow up.

Functional

A functional resume allows you to categorize your skills by function, emphasizing your talents and abilities. Knowing your military experience and functions, you can see how this would group your background more effectively.

Combination

This one does exactly what it sounds like. Below the Objective at the top of the page (after your name and address), are paragraphs that describe your job functions. Next, comes a section titled "Employment Experience." This is where you would list the employers and the dates only. Since you have already described your abilities in the functional paragraphs, you shouldn't repeat that in the employment section.

If you have moved up through the ranks within a particular job function, this will become more apparent if you use the functional format. Remember, employers want to see how you did at your previous jobs, and the functional paragraphs are the perfect spot to highlight your achievements.

Once you have decided on the format that will work best for you, select a design that will fit your personality and your job search. The typical designs are elegant, professional, casual, and contemporary. You will find many sites that will offer you samples of each of these. If you don't have a program like Microsoft Word, you might want to consider using a friend's computer, or perhaps go to your local library.

Gaps in Your Employment Record

Coming from the military, you may not experience the same issue with gaps in employment as your civilian counterparts. Gaps in job histories generally send up flags to prospective employers, because they want to know what you have been doing. If you do have gaps, the simple way to do this is to group your activities to reflect what you have actually done, but not set off any alarms.

If you do find yourself with a confusing or fragmented work history or lots of short-term jobs, combine several of the jobs or functions into a single group. For example:

2003 -2005

Clerk/ Administrative Assistant; Army Public Affairs office, Company Headquarters, Central Command...

Instead of having too many entries that may seem to jump around throughout that same time period, grouping offers the same, accurate information without any distortions.

Choosing the Right Words

People will judge you by the words you use, so choose them wisely. Sometimes employers have to make snap decisions, which could be snap judgments as well. What that means is that the titles and the terms you use could have a strong impact on the direction that your resume will take. We're not trying to scare you, but rather to inform you of the reality that lies ahead.

For instance, if your job title was Administrative Assistant, but your function was something slightly different, perhaps you should consider saying Office Manager instead. Or, if you think that may be too misleading, then the safe way is to list it as: Administrative Assistant (Office Manager). This will let the employer know that you consider the position to be something in between or a combination.

There are also a great deal of people that will tell you to use "power words" to get a stronger impact. That is a good idea, but also be careful not to use old, tired clichés, such as describing yourself as a people person, or that you think outside of the box. Yawn! You can find dozens of sites, or publications at the library, that will offer help in selecting the proper terminology, such as "Words That Work" by Dr. Frank Luntz.

Be creative and do your homework. Remember, this isn't a flyer that you are posting on a bulletin board to find a new roommate, or to help you find your lost dog. Take your time and do the research. This could be the very thing that gets you that big invitation to an interview. Don't blow it. Also remember that you will find experts around every corner, many of them will be your family and friends. They all mean well, but generally their advice is worth as much as you paid for.

***Do your homework!**
That's not exactly what you thought you would hear at this point in your life, but it's good advice.*

Use resources that are available to you, either online or at your local library.

*Use our listing of online resources by going to:
www.PatriotsGroup.com,
then select **Resource Center***

Additional Points to Consider

OK, we're almost done. There are a few additional topics, or housekeeping issues, that we need to cover, and you will be ready to get started. You have heard that you need to be creative, but more importantly, NEVER lie. There is no situation in this process where that would be considered acceptable. If someone advises you that it's actually alright, ignore them. This is your future on the line, not theirs.

When you are writing your job descriptions and accomplishments, make sure you are using words that describe your function, and emphasize your abilities, using numbers and statistics. Be proud of what you have done in serving your country. Your pride and confidence will show, not only in your resume, but also in your resume.

Finally, and this is just a reminder, but... **DO YOUR RESEARCH!!** You will be able to find plenty of information about how to create a resume that will have the most impact.

Seek Help!

There is nothing wrong with accepting the fact that you might need help. Finding the perfect job or career for you, and getting the best salary for that position, is not a simple task that should be taken lightly. It is an important tool for your future.

As we have stated before, there are a lot of resources available to you, which becomes both helpful, and confusing. There will be many experts telling you various things, so you need to take everything in, and then apply those that work best for you.

This document was designed to give you a general concept of what you need to do, and as with every other piece of information you will find, use it as a guide to develop your most effective resume.

As a transitioning military person, the best source for information about your job search is www.Military.com. Military.com is a part of Monster Worldwide, one of the top employment sites available. You will find a great deal of information, but once again, remember that it may not all fit your needs.

Good luck!

Call Us:
847-381-5303

Visit Us:
www.PatriotsGroup.com

