

Solve Your Toughest Resume Challenges to Win More Interviews!

25 Secrets to Achieving
Fast-Track Career Success

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A unique résumé authority, Laura Smith-Proulx, CPRW, CIC is a former corporate recruiter and journalist who has created thousands of powerfully written résumés that gave professionals a strong competitive edge.

Nominated for International Resume Industry Awards

Laura has been repeatedly named as a finalist for the distinguished "Toast of the Résumé Industry" awards by Career Directors International, where her work was compared with professional résumé writers the world over!

Published in International Résumé Works

Her résumés and job search tips have been featured in the books:

- Expert Résumés for Engineers, Wendy Enelow and Louise Kursmark
- Résumés for the Rest of Us, Arnold Boldt
- The Quick Résumé and Cover Letter Book, Lori Cates Hand
- Same-Day Résumé, Lori Cates Hand
- Job Search Bloopers, Susan Guarneri and Laura DeCarlo
- Expert Résumés for Military-to-Civilian Career Transitions, Wendy Enelow and Louise Kursmark

Quotes from Laura on résumé topics have been featured in articles for the Society of Human Resource Professionals, as well as the Denver Post.

She is also a sought-after columnist on career topics for the national recruitment website Jobing.com.

Laura's credentials include:

- Thousands of successfully employed clients in executive, management, IT, engineering, military transition, sales / marketing, operations, medical, financial, and human resources professions
- Certified Professional Resume Writer, Certified Interview Coach™, and Candidate for Certified Career Management Coach
- 18-year management and IT consulting career, with projects at Motorola, IBM, First Trust, Wilson Sporting Goods, Boston Market, and Qwest
- Former corporate and consulting recruiter to major corporations throughout Chicago and Denver
- Board participation and active membership in Career Management Alliance, Society for Human Resource Management, Career Directors International, Professional Association of Résumé Writers & Career Coaches, and National Résumé Writers' Association
- Bachelor of Business Administration in Management Information Systems and Journalism from the University of Wisconsin

Introduction

Welcome! Before we get started, let me fill you in on a little information that will help you understand my focus and intent with this book.

I spent many years in the corporate world, rising to a management-level position and seemingly fighting to land every opportunity.

Along the way, as I became aware of the great (and not so great!) ways people tend to promote themselves for a job, I started to realize that writing a knock-your-socks-off résumé was NOT a common skill.

As I advanced in my career, I received some great (and again, not so great!) advice on creating my own résumés. I took pieces that worked from anyone who would offer it – recruiters, colleagues, a few great books here and there.

It was interesting to see how this fit with the concepts I learned as a journalism student – get those first few words to speak volumes, focus on your key message, and the rest of your document will take care of itself.

Year after year, when I walked into an interview, I heard “You have one of the most well-written résumés we’ve ever seen,” from a highly impressed hiring manager waiting for me. This got to be quite routine for me, and of course, I loved it!

As I rose into positions requiring me to screen candidates, I’ll never forget the young man who came into my office one day. He had an absolutely astounding résumé – the kind that left even ME excited to read it.

However, he lacked interview skills big-time. When I say lacked, I mean he could not answer a SINGLE question posed to him, no matter how carefully I phrased it.

As it turned out, my corporate client manager was hiring for the same position, and flagged me down in the hall one day, waving the same résumé! “Look at this guy!” he said excitedly. “He’s exactly what we are looking for!”

Now I knew my client boss well – very, very well.

I faced him and said, “You’re not going to believe this, but I’ve already interviewed him. You should just take a pass. He couldn’t answer any of my questions.”

The boss was unfazed, and was insistent that we bring him in now. I knew they were hurting for great candidates, so I thought they would eventually figure out the error of their ways.

Other managers at the corporation interviewed him and each pulled me aside to tell me privately that this guy was a bust! NO ONE was impressed.

And what finally happened? That same client manager hired this candidate, OVER the objections of his management subordinates and OVER my recommendations.

This was ALL based on that magic piece of paper – the original résumé.

NEVER again did I doubt the power of putting your best foot forward to get into an interview!

Back to MY career: I was constantly asked how I landed such great jobs. In fact, before I knew it, I had volunteered to look over—and rewrite—friend's résumés when they couldn't get an interview.

For nearly 15 years, I was able to help so many people win new jobs, that I was asked over and over again – why don't you turn this into a business?

The rest, as they say, is history! Fast forward to today: I write résumés that get my clients in the door of prestigious corporations, fast-growing businesses, and up-and-coming players throughout numerous industries.

Before we get to all the steps for creating your own masterpiece, let's first make sure you truly understand all the ways a powerful résumé can help your career take off.

The 3 Ways a Powerful Resume will Help Your Career:

1. Writing a great résumé can make your interviews golden.

Your career isn't just made up of great words that will catapult you to career success; it is a marketing piece that is designed precisely to get your target audience (the hiring manager) to realize how you offer a better solution than other candidates.

Plus, the information that you draw out in preparation for developing your résumé will arm you with an unbelievable edge in the interview.
2. A powerful résumé can show employers that you have fully prepared for your search.

The key here is that, as you rise through the ranks of corporate America, the top players consistently show that they know how to manage not only their work, but their own careers.

This means being able to focus on an end goal (namely, a different job) and achieve it.
3. Communication is the name of the game for anyone who intends to move forward in their career.

What do most top executives have in common with the rising stars at their companies? The ability to communicate clearly and deliver a message that is easily understood at all levels of the corporation.

By providing a résumé with the professional touch, you are ensuring that your message (meaning the unique value that you offer) is built into your job search and that hiring managers can get it prior to ever meeting you!

How to Use This Manual

You're about to read so much valuable and fascinating information that, if you take it in all once, it may seem a bit overwhelming. That's why I broke it all out into concepts that reflect the exact method that I use with my clients.

What I recommend is that you concentrate on one Secret at a time and focus on the tips that appeal most to you.

Many people who buy this manual simply devour the majority of it in one fell swoop. This is fine (especially if you're under deadline to get a résumé out to a hot job!), but it is key that you go back and implement the ideas in the book.

Of course, I've included some tips on key information more than once. This is so that, if you skip around, you will still be able to see how all the pieces fit together.

About The Appendices

Throughout this guide, I'll refer to various pieces of information and resources that I have included to help you create your résumé. Many of these are concepts that are best read in one grouping, such as résumé examples and templates.

NOTICE THAT ALL THE APPENDICES ARE SEPARATE DOCUMENTS. This was done to preserve formatting and page settings among the résumés and templates provided.

So, ready to begin? Get ready to take a journey that will help you learn exactly how to create a document that reflects your unique value and gains attention from hiring managers—your own expert résumé!

RÉSUMÉ SECRET #5

Attract Attention With a Professionally Developed Format

One of the best-kept secrets of professional résumé writers is that an attractive, clearly formatted document can do wonders for even the most mundane content.

Many job seekers will set out to write their résumés using only a blank document, setting appropriate margins and using double-spaces to separate sections.

Even worse, millions of professionals have used the Microsoft Word template that comes standard with the package. (How many copies of this software have been sold?)

Now, imagine how many hiring managers have had to look at hundreds, maybe even THOUSANDS of the identical résumés each day? I hope this gives you a good idea why some job seekers have difficulty standing out.

Using the same format as everyone else will not only FAIL to differentiate your résumé, but can also negate the time spent creating dynamic content if the document looks exactly like so many others.

SUCCESS TIP:

95% of all job seekers use either a blank document or the standard Microsoft Word template to format their résumés. Put yourself in the TOP 5% by using a professionally developed résumé style.

This is why I have included 5 professional résumé formats for display in Appendix B as part of your package; you will see that each format can be used for a different purpose and Career Goal.

These templates represent a key portion of my Résumé Strategy System, and until now, have NOT been made available to anyone outside of the professional résumé writing community!

I have tuned each of these formats for your exclusive use, plus added actual samples that use these templates in Appendix A.

You will notice that each résumé style has applicability to a particular industry, and that both the font and presentation were CAREFULLY tuned to the candidate's career goal.

SUCCESS TIP:

Functional résumés have seen their day. Covering a spotty work history with a creative format can irritate, rather than impress, hiring managers.

If you've already looked over the professional formats that I have supplied, you will see that all of the résumés feature a Qualifications Summary, followed by a Highlights Section, and then the traditional reverse-chronological Work History.

Why do I recommend that you skip using a functional résumé format? Better yet, what IS a functional résumé?

The functional résumé is the brainchild of résumé writers from the previous decade. Someone came up with the bright idea that candidates should "minimize" job hopping or unrelated work experience by showing functional categories (meaning job skills) on the first résumé page.

This left the next page with a tiny section listing only titles, companies, and from/to dates for work history following it.

It was a brilliant idea—in conception ONLY. After many job seekers started to use a functional format to "hide" job hopping or other career sins, hiring managers rightfully developed a distaste for functional résumés that persists to this day.

Remember that your résumé will receive just a QUICK scan by employers! They must see pertinent details and a good reverse chronological job history to read further.

My strong recommendation is to use an HONEST, straightforward approach to provide details of your professional history.

In later chapters, I will review some strategies for ensuring that an employer can quickly see WHY you are targeting a specific job.

SUCCESS TIP:

Ensure that your new résumé is easily read by choosing one of several standard fonts, such as Arial or Times New Roman.

When reviewing résumé styles, it is a good idea to stick with a basic font. Doing so ensures that your résumé can be easily read or scanned by a prospective employer.

Don't make the mistake of candidates who thought that an unusual font on a résumé would help them stand out... only to find that conversion problems among various word processing programs had made their résumé unreadable!

When I create new résumés for my clients, I often use Arial, Times New Roman, or perhaps Book Antiqua for my documents.

When using your new résumé online, convert the document to ASCII text so that it can be successfully pasted into a text box. The same conversion is needed in order to post a résumé online to a job site.

I will cover techniques for ASCII text conversion in a later chapter.

SUCCESS TIP:

The one-page rule is dead! Two pages should suffice for most job seekers, while one page is still used for early career professionals.

Given that résumés must be quickly scanned by hiring managers, clarity has become a more important criterion than length. Employers are MOST interested in résumés that are easy to read and well-formatted, with relevant information.

A general rule of thumb is that 6-8 years of experience is the breaking point at which to start using a second page.

SUCCESS TIP:

Résumé real estate is VALUABLE. Keep your format clean with an abundance of white space to ensure that it is easily digested by the reader.

As shown by the professionally developed résumé formats in Appendix B, documents that use font formatting, lines, borders, and other techniques can allow the writer to add many components while still preserving white space.

Do the hiring manager a favor by using various methods, including underlining, bold, and italics, to set off different pieces of information.

A caveat: italics can make text difficult to read, so use this treatment sparingly.