

# GET•THE Interview EVERY TIME

Fortune 500 Hiring Professionals' Tips  
for Writing Winning Résumés and Cover Letters

Brenda Greene

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## RÉSUMÉ FORMAT AND DESIGN

*"I prefer résumés that are concise and easy to read."*

**MARY MATATALL**

Director of Global Recruiting, Continental Airlines

**H**iring professionals see hundreds, sometimes thousands, of résumés each week, and, generally, they spend no more than two minutes looking at each one. Many Fortune 500 survey participants mentioned that an "easy-to-read" résumé was one of the prerequisites to offering a prospective employee an interview, so choosing the right format and design can make a difference.

### SELECTING THE FORMAT: CHRONOLOGICAL OR FUNCTIONAL

Creating an easy-to-read résumé starts with the basics and moves toward the finer points. First, you must decide what format works best for your skills and experience.

Most résumés follow a reverse chronological format: a time history of your work experience, beginning with your most recent position. Many recruiters prefer it simply because it is *easy to read*. A chronological depiction of your work history allows hiring professionals to see how long you were with each company. It also allows them to obtain a good idea of your growth as an employee and learn what companies you worked for as well as assess your increasing responsibilities.

The functional résumé, on the other hand, is more skills based and categorical. It works particularly well if there is a gap in your work history, you have limited paid experience, you worked part-time and/or as an independent contractor, or

you are changing careers. For instance, if you want to emphasize the skills for a sales management position that you acquired working as a volunteer soccer coach and fundraiser rather than highlight your last short-term job as a programmer, the functional layout may be a better choice.

But functional résumés have their downside. Practiced human resources professionals can easily detect work gaps or camouflage. Even if a recent relocation and a work gap were legitimate, a functional résumé may still send out the red flags to *some* employers. Initially, they may wonder if you are hiding something. The good news is that an unconventional employment history can still be transformed into a virtue if the information is presented in a strong, honest, and deliberate fashion.

Not every work history falls neatly into either a chronological or a functional format. On the contrary, there are quite a few variations—linear, creative, accomplishment, international, keyword, targeted, and curriculum vitae as well as a combination of these formats—that may be more suited to your needs. Basically, though, they are all derivatives of either the chronological or functional format, so these two formats will be the focus of this chapter.

Before you choose a format that works best for your skills and experience, you need to compile key information so that it can be positioned as needed. This is the backbone of your résumé, and you need to spend a good portion of your time in developing it and then, at a later point, revising it. Not only must it be 100 percent accurate and error free, but it must also be vibrant and focused. If the key information is faulty, even the best design will fail. For now, just compile the basic information so that you can begin to build a multipurpose résumé. At this point you may start to transfer all the earlier research you put in your notebook or handheld device into your newly created job data file on your computer. This is where you will also store your key information.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE

Every résumé should provide the following data: contact information, focus statement, professional experience, and educational background. Avoid listing the following: personal data (height, weight, age, marital status, photograph), hobbies, references, salary requirement, or history. Your résumé must accentuate the positive. Save any sensitive issues (such as a physical disability or criminal record or your seven children) for later.

Your key information should be arranged as follows.

**Contact Information.** In the digital age, this information takes up more and more space on a résumé. How much data should you provide? Begin with

your name, address, home telephone number, and e-mail address. You have to decide if it's necessary to provide a daytime contact number; if you don't want to include your current work number, cellular numbers are good alternatives. Some individuals may want to include their URL so employers can go to a Web site if they have the inclination. Your URL should be at the top of your résumé, which should resemble the following:

*Martha Hempenstall*  
*111 Avenue E*  
*New York, NY 10000*  
*(212) 674-1000*  
*marts@aol.com*  
*www.marts.com*

**Focus Statement.** It's known by many names (*career objective, expertise, skills summary, professional qualifications, key features, accomplishments, background, highlights, professional profile*), but usually it's the brief statement appearing after your contact information. It pulls all of your information together and should tell a prospective employer, in a few sentences, what your level of expertise is or what type of position you are seeking at the new company or what your most significant accomplishments are. Information Technology (IT) professionals often include a skills summary here that details their proficiency in hardware and software. As mentioned earlier, don't shoot for too wide a target. *Try to anticipate what the prospective employer needs* and pepper this statement with employer-directed, attention-catching words. Sometimes a focus statement is as simple as the title of the job you seek. Most are longer. Here's an example of a focus statement (aka career objective), which would follow your contact information (notice that it lists both the position being applied for as well as the candidate's expertise):

**OBJECTIVE:** Development Associate

Strategic writer with eight years' experience fundraising more than \$2 million and developing—from start to finish—successful, long-term nonprofit, government, and corporate campaigns.

**Professional Experience.** This section is the crux of your résumé. How you list your previous employment or experience will depend on whether you use the chronological or functional format. When preparing the chronological résumé, your most recent experience should be listed first and then earlier professional experience in descending order by date. A functional résumé, on the other hand,

emphasizes your skills rather than where you worked and for how long (although it is often recommended that you give dates and where you worked but in a less prominent position). Sometimes you describe a particular position, sometimes you describe just your skills. The first position in the professional experience section in the functional format is often reserved for the work experience that most closely relates to the position being sought at the new company. Your professional experience section in the functional format will be more skills oriented and less specific than it would be in the chronological format.

What's most important to remember, according to a 2002 job market study done by the *New York Times* (February 5, 2002), is that résumés grab recruiters' attention when the "work experience fits the open job." Julie Ruesewald, a senior human resources generalist at ALLTEL, agrees. She said, "Don't apply for jobs you're not qualified for."

In the chronological format, the emphasis should be on the professional experience listed first, as most employers are primarily interested in your current or most recent employment. If it's not obvious what industry you worked for and you are certain the prospective employer won't be familiar with the company, such as CIS Group, Inc., describe it briefly, either right after the name (technology) or in the description of accomplishments or duties. The first entry usually gets the most space on a résumé. A word of caution to those who feel the need to fudge some information: The Internet has made it relatively easy to verify almost anything, so make sure all of the data here are accurate.

**Educational Background.** List your degrees and professional certifications in this section. How much space you devote to your educational background depends on what you want to emphasize in your résumé. If you graduated within the last five years or have virtually no work experience, you may want to expand on your college coursework or certifications here. Another common option for recent graduates is to rearrange the order of the key information and highlight the educational section by moving it to the top of the page following your contact information. (One Fortune 500 respondent recommended that you list your education first, even if you have a lot of experience.) Whether you place dates next to your completed degrees is a decision you will have to make. Some prefer not to include these dates because they believe it pinpoints their age, even though anti-discrimination laws should protect applicants. But if you feel strongly about how old you are, then don't include dates here.

If you are fluent in languages or have a relevant professional affiliation, you may also include it in this section. If you are in the process of completing a degree, list your anticipated graduation date. Some résumé books and career

experts recommend that high school information or unfinished college degrees not be listed, although this issue is not cut and dried. As Dan Bankey of Mutual of Omaha said, “Absolutely include any training and continuing education. It can be a differentiator.” You need to decide whether mentioning an incomplete degree will further your cause.

Bankey added: “We sort by years of schooling, so if someone has some college, put it in. High school can be important if it’s the highest level one has. We look at the highest level. Falsifying an application can disqualify you; truth and honesty are really important to us. We find that one-third of résumés have something that is not correct, but we’ll give a candidate an opportunity to explain it. People really feel the need to have a college degree.”

## CONTENT IS KING

Your contact information, focus statement, professional experience, and educational background (regardless of where it is placed) form the backbone of your multipurpose résumé. While there’s plenty of room for variation in the design of a résumé, this information must be correct, readable, and dynamic. Don’t spend hours, however, rearranging the information in a hundred different ways. The more accessible and straightforward your information, the better your chances that your résumé will hit its intended target.

Content is king in a résumé, so it’s a good idea to devote most of your time on developing how you present your experience. Some effort, nonetheless, must be directed toward the design of the résumé before you pull all the pieces together, because a good design makes your content more readable.

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

What are some of the design features of an easy-to-read résumé? Balance, symmetry, and white space all contribute to the visual impact of a reader-friendly résumé. No one should have to struggle to review your material. And a good design goes a long way toward easing eyestrain, especially when hundreds of résumés must be reviewed.

Adhering to the notion that a résumé should never be more than one page long, some job seekers tend to cram too much information in too little space, making it difficult to find relevant information and perhaps explaining why *74 percent of the survey participants prefer two-page résumés*. Unless you are a newcomer

to the job market or have limited experience, plan to write two *full* pages. Several Fortune 500 respondents said the length depends on how extensive your experience is. Use your best judgment, but don't forget that because hundreds of résumés are competing for the recruiter's attention on any given day, you don't want to overwhelm a recruiter with an eight-page résumé.

Choose either full-width spacing or a column approach to achieve the balance needed to display all your key information in a flattering light. As a starting point, allow one inch for your margins—top and bottom as well as left and right. Sherry Rest, a manager of recruiting and staffing solutions at Lucent Technologies, said, "Although résumés are most often reviewed in electronic format, make sure your printed format has margins that will allow a recruiter or hiring manager to make notes."

Experiment with fully justified or ragged-right margins. Full justification, whereby both margins are aligned, may give you more words per line, but a ragged right margin (the right margin has an uneven edge) is faster to read, according to a study by Microsoft and reported in Susan Britton Whitcomb's book *Résumé Magic* (Indianapolis: JIST, 1999). Just remember that the decision to use a fully justified or ragged right margin will not hurt your cause one way or the other. Plan to keep your design as simple and readable as possible. The hours you labor over the design may be an exercise in futility, especially if the only version your prospective employer reviews is your e-mail's plain text version (without formatting and embellishment).

To get a few ideas about indentation, bullets, rules, and columns, take a look at how other résumés are designed (see the samples at the back of this book). You can also browse through online job boards. Choosing a design for your résumé depends on how much information you need to include—and then finding the design that will display it in the most flattering fashion.

If your word processor has résumé templates, experiment with them but don't resort to filling in the blanks. Using templates may encourage you to settle for a run-of-the-mill description of your work history or tempt you to rush through the process of putting the pieces together yourself. The more time spent creating your résumé, the better your objective and design. You don't want to give the recruiter the impression that your résumé was thrown together in a rush with little thought or focus.

Kenneth Garrett, a vice president in human resources at FMC Corporation, said in the survey that you should "know what's on your résumé and be able to articulate it precisely." Your résumé should tell the recruiter that you have thought about who you are as an employee and what your career goals are—and that you have spent time presenting this information in a purposeful manner in your résumé.

## MAKE IT INVITING TO READ

Your résumé should be a logical arrangement of key information, which is why order and consistency—or the lack of it—play such a big role in résumé writing. Chances are your résumé won't even be read if the information is presented in a haphazard fashion, so before focusing on the big picture, pay attention to the small details.

One of the trickiest areas of writing a résumé is consistency because of the many variables. Typefaces, indents, bullets, wording—all of these elements have to be presented in a consistent way. You don't want Montana showing up in three different forms (Montana, Mont., and MT) or one job title to be in boldface and the next job title in italics. Because of all these variables, proofread a résumé several times. Make sure verb tense is correct; your punctuation is consistent; your indents align correctly. Take the extra time to do this.

Your computer has a wide array of typefaces. Times New Roman, Courier New, Garamond, and Arial are all good choices (they also convert well). *Giddyup*, **ULTRAERONZO**, and *Visigoth* will probably send red flags to more conservative recruiters. Mixing up typefaces, such as Arial for one section and Garamond for the next, is hard to pull off unless you're very creative. Err on the side of caution when it comes to typefaces; otherwise, the résumé may look immature, cluttered, or downright unreadable.

You should, however, use bold, italics, and capitalization interchangeably so long as they are used in a consistent pattern (for instance, make sure *all* of the names of the companies are capitalized or use bold to highlight *every* position held). The easiest to read is roman type, so don't overdo it with too much boldface or italic type. Practice restraint.

Start with a font size of 12 for normal text. Some claim you can reduce the size of text to 10, but 10 is hard to read and doesn't print as well as 12. Resist the temptation to squeeze all of your information on one page by going to a smaller font. Instead it's better to rearrange your résumé—or at least the white space—than to go to 10 points. If it's necessary to fit in one or two extra lines, then reduce the text to 11 at the minimum (however, for electronic submissions, 10 points is typical). Going smaller may discourage some readers, especially those who have read innumerable résumés from 9 in the morning until 5 at night.

You may experiment with larger sizes for your headings, but don't get carried away (14 and 16 are adequate). By selectively enlarging the typeface, you are highlighting something you think is important, and it's hoped that the important something is a great job or accomplishment (and not your name).

Positioning your information appropriately is also important. If recruiters have to scour the remote corners of your résumé for pertinent information, the



résumé is missing its mark. Your selling points should be placed up front, and don't hide important information in a lot of detail. Short, direct points and paragraphs are better than long ones, so edit rigorously, and try to whittle the résumé down to its essence.

You should invest in quality stationery with matching envelopes if you're mailing your résumé as well as quality stationery for copies of your résumé, which you will bring to your interviews. Stick to white or neutral colors for a professional appearance. Bright-colored paper (florescent pink or iridescent blue, for instance) sends the wrong message to recruiters. Use a laser printer or a photocopy machine for extra copies. In the digital age, it doesn't pay to invest in offset printing (and making 100 copies) because, according to the Fortune 500 participants, it's better to tweak each résumé for a specific job. In many respects, your résumé will be a continual work in progress.

If you don't have access to a computer (or you know for certain that someone else can do a much better job), then you might want to consider hiring a professional résumé writer. You still have to write your key information, but résumé writers can help you with design, keywords, focus, and target. You can find résumé writers in the Yellow Pages. A certified professional résumé writer (CPRW) has passed competency tests, so look for this designation when reviewing his or her credentials. The CPRW certification process is administered by the Professional Association of Résumé Writers & Career Coaches (PARW/CC). Remember that these certified résumé writers will assist you in preparing a multipurpose résumé, but you still may have to revise it each time you apply for a new position.

For those of you who may need additional help, nonprofit career counseling services are available in every state. Also, every college has a career center that reaches out to the college and, sometimes, general population. Don't be afraid to seek help. Career counseling firms and job search companies are also alternatives, but be wary. Not all of these firms are legitimate; some charge advance fees and deliver only empty promises. Before you decide to contract the services of a company, review [www.jobscams.com](http://www.jobscams.com) or visit [www.execcareer.com](http://www.execcareer.com), both of which monitor career-marketing companies.

If you go to headhunters, remain proactive. Become as involved in the process as possible, even if they create your entire résumé from scratch and choose each company to which your résumé is submitted. David Murphy of McGraw-Hill recommended that job seekers "work the headhunter." And Ken Dean, an assistant vice president at the Bank of New York, had this caveat: "You cannot rely on [headhunters] to put [your résumé] in front of the correct person." With this in mind, think of the headhunter as a partner.

But chances are that if you are reading this book, you plan to create your own résumé. As long as you have access to the basic tools (computer and the Inter-

net) and follow a few sound guidelines on language, layout, and design, it's not that difficult to create a winning résumé that opens doors.

## PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Once your key information is written and a format chosen, you are ready to build a résumé. This section provides step-by-step suggestions, using “Before” and “After” versions of both chronological and functional formats to illustrate the various points. (See additional sample résumés at the back of the book.) Many of the suggestions are based on feedback from the Fortune 500 participants.

The two “Before” résumés are multipurpose and have wide applications in their respective fields. The “After” résumés are employer driven and job specific, which is what most companies expect today. The first résumé in this chapter uses a chronological format; the second is based on a functional format.

According to Stephen Heckert, senior manager of human resources at JDS Uniphase: “Focus your résumé on a company's current or future job openings. This may mean developing a different résumé for each job opening.” If you're worried about writing a new résumé every time you apply for a job, relax. It's not necessary to write 30 different résumés for 30 different jobs. What you ultimately should aim for is a multipurpose, but dynamic, résumé that can be tweaked every time you apply for a specific job. It's easier than you think.

## BUILDING A CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ

In a chronological format, you describe what you did and how well you did it next to your employer information. You list your work history, beginning with your most recent employer and ending with your least recent employer. It's a winning format because it is simple and direct. If you have a lot of gaps in your work history, this format will reveal every one of them because it is arranged by date. That's one of the reasons employers prefer the chronological format, which easily discloses whether you have a stable work history with a progression of responsibilities and accomplishments.

Creating a fictitious scenario, as shown in Figure 3.1, better illustrates why a chronological format works best for this sample résumé.

Mary relocated to northern New Jersey when her husband was transferred. For a few years, she commuted to her job in White Plains, but then the two hours of bumper-to-bumper traffic each day began to get the better of her. She decided to change jobs, but she wasn't exactly sure how she wanted to proceed in her

career path, so she quit her job in White Plains and hurriedly revised her résumé in response to a classified ad she saw in the paper. She got the job at the local library in New Jersey, and although it was not a permanent solution, the position satisfied her on other levels. She worked in that capacity for two years—enjoying the interaction with the public.

When the position of administrative assistant at a large book distributorship came to her attention (by investigating open jobs on a company Web site), Mary decided to make a move. Before she did anything, though, she had to revamp her résumé to apply for the job. She decided to use a chronological format because of her solid work history. What her résumé looked like when she applied for the library position is shown in Figure 3.1.

Mary's résumé indicates she is a competent and loyal employee who worked at a well-known Fortune 500 company for 16 years. She had no trouble securing the position of assistant librarian because she is an enthusiastic and reliable individual with varied interests and talents. Now she wants to set her sights higher—on a position that is more challenging and financially rewarding. She read the description of the administrative assistant position at a Fortune 500 book distributorship on a company Web site and realized it combines her earlier administrative talents as well as her interest in books:

The Merchandising Department has an excellent opportunity for an Administrative Assistant. The ideal candidate will be responsible for providing administrative support to the Director, Store Inventory management and occasional support to two Vice Presidents, managing routine correspondence for Field Merchandise Department, and coordinating travel schedules and reservations. You will also be responsible for preparing agendas for meetings, acting as liaison with appointments and guests, and assisting the Field Merchandise Department with projects and initiatives. The ideal candidate will be creating reports and schedules using Excel, Word, and other software, performing administrative functions such as transcribing minutes of meetings, arranging conference calls, and providing backup phone support. Additional responsibilities include coordinating filing systems, ordering and maintaining supplies, and arranging for equipment maintenance.

**Qualified candidates** should have some college and at least 4 years of administrative experience. You will also have excellent computer skills, including MS Word, Excel, Access, and Adobe Illustrator, and excellent verbal and written communication skills. Additionally, you must have the ability to multitask, be extremely organized and a team player. Must be responsive to deadlines.

FIGURE 3.1 *Mary Smith's "Before" Chronological Résumé*

*Mary E. Smith*

*1 Lincoln Ave., Ridgewood, NJ 07100, (201) 670-1000*

Objective

I am a seasoned professional with excellent administrative and interpersonal skills and am interested in an executive administrative assistant position.

Experience

1985–2001 IBM Corporation, White Plains, NY

Assistant to the Vice President of Marketing–North America

- Extensive travel arrangements, both domestic and international
- Executive meeting planning and coordination
- Heavy calendar and e-mail correspondence
- Follow-up with staff
- Backup to the Americas Vice President's desk

Executive Secretary to the Director of Marketing–Latin America

- Liaison to Latin America assignees
- Travel coordination in the Americas
- Heavy calendaring, conference calls and meeting planning
- Focal point to Latin America secretaries
- Backup to the Vice President of Marketing desk

Marketing Programs Coordinator

- Coordinate customer and sales force mailings
- Brochure production, inventory and design
- Alumni and prospect databases
- E-mailings to customer representatives

Education

Little Flower Catholic School for Girls–Philadelphia, PA  
(academic as well as business curriculum)

Interests

Reading, exercise, tennis, gardening, needlepoint

References

Available upon request.

If you are wondering whether Mary can just update the “Before” résumé and have a chance to interview for what she thinks may be her dream job, the answer is *probably not*.

Mary’s “Before” résumé is a chronological, multipurpose document with a broad target. She could find a position with this résumé, but it will be difficult to get an interview at a company that can match her skills, her desire to grow, her interests, and her financial needs. She is doing herself a disservice by not substantially revising her résumé.

Let’s take a closer look at the “Before” résumé, section by section.

**Contact Information.** The leadoff font is different from the text font. The italicized contact information isn’t the problem; the clashing fonts are. If you are committed to using italics for the contact information, at least use the same italics type as the text. It makes more sense. She should also remove the comma after the ZIP code (no need to put a comma before a parenthesis). Better yet, though, is to drop the telephone number down to the third line because, in this day and age, providing the prospective employer easy access to you means including more information. What about a cell phone number? An e-mail address should definitely be included.

**Focus Statement.** Mary’s “Objective” is not focused. Instead, it is generic and a bit tired—and doesn’t do justice to her extensive experience at a Fortune 500 company. She will, of course, need to revise it in her new résumé to include her current position as an assistant librarian. But if she resorts to a broad cliché instead of vividly describing what she hopes to attain and what she has to offer the prospective employer, chances are most recruiters’ eyes will glaze over.

**Experience.** This is the heart of the “Before” résumé. Mary missed an opportunity to show her increasing responsibilities and promotion. Even though assistant to the vice president of marketing was the most current position she held at the Fortune 500 company (that’s why she listed it first), she was promoted from executive secretary to marketing programs coordinator. It’s not obvious in the “Before” résumé because Mary decided she preferred working for company movers and shakers to working independently in the marketing department, so she shifted the information around—a valid personal decision. She knows herself best, but for now she needs to highlight her increasing responsibilities and promotion in the résumé so recruiters pay attention. By simply providing dates alongside the three positions listed and moving the marketing programs coordinator position to the second slot, she would highlight the steady progression in her career.

Fortune 500 survey participants made the same point. Sherri Martin, director of human resources at Deere & Company, said she likes a résumé to exhibit “a career history of success demonstrated through advancement.” David Murphy, executive vice president at The McGraw-Hill Companies, said that “consistent career development” was one of the three qualities that made a résumé stand out.

As for the bulleted description of Mary’s responsibilities, it is brief, which is positive, but the sentences should not be fragments (without verbs). It is more dynamic and action oriented when a verb is used in the bulleted sentences (nouns are not necessary, but periods are). A résumé is not a memo but rather a formal introduction to a new company. Recruiters expect you to be professional by following the writing style typically found in most résumés (see Chapter 4 for more information on this topic).

In addition, the description of Mary’s duties is vague when it needs to be specific. Cecilia McKenney, a vice president in human resources at Pepsi Bottling Group, said she expects to see a “clear career progression that shows increasing responsibilities and/or skill organization” in a résumé.

Finally, although many excellent keywords (nouns or short phrases that describe your qualifications and will be picked up if your résumé is scanned) are sprinkled throughout the description of Mary’s responsibilities, there is room for more. Cherri Davies, a manager of staffing at Health Net, Inc., said her company “screens résumés submitted by e-mail or URL Web site by keyword searches.” Make sure your résumé contains enough keywords to make it past the first round.

**Educational Background.** Most résumé books recommend that you do not include your high school or incomplete degrees, even though most job seekers feel they must put something in this section. Because Mary does not have a college degree, she lists her high school instead. She could strengthen this section by including any continuing education classes that will be relevant in her new position. She should highlight and expand on her computer know-how. Even though working for a large computer company assumes a certain understanding of technology, recruiters (as well as scanners) are looking for specifics on this front. When asked the number one reason for rejecting résumés, 54 percent of the participants said a “lack of computer skills.”

There isn’t a consensus for the inclusion of “interests” on résumés. Twenty-one of the Fortune 500 participants said applicants should not include outside interests on a résumé; 7 said to include them only if they were relevant to the job; and 14 said it was valid to include them. The safest bet, then, is to include only those interests that may enhance your performance on the job or are applicable to the position being sought. It will not be a strike against you if you forgo includ-

ing outside interests. Mary can better further her cause if she elaborates on her technical know-how in the preceding section rather than highlight her outside interests in a separate section.

Finally, it goes without saying that references are “available upon request,” so there’s no need to include this statement on a résumé.

## THE “AFTER” RÉSUMÉ

Now take a look at how the “After” résumé shown in Figure 3.2 is designed and targeted so that it hits the mark for the position Mary is seeking at the book distributorship. Compare the wording in the job posting with the words Mary now uses to describe her qualifications in her new résumé.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Fortune 500 survey participants prefer brief résumés; 74 percent said it should be no more than two pages and 18 percent said it should be no more than one. Mary’s résumé did not warrant two pages. Instead, it’s a one-page, chronological résumé that highlights what the particular employer needs.

Mary has many talents to offer, but she needed to reposition her information and put more emphasis on the positive. She also had to redesign her résumé so that it exhibited more purpose and logic. Here are the changes that made the difference.

- Uses a Garamond font throughout (14-point, bold italics for the heading, 12-point roman for the text).
- Flushes her heading to the right to counterbalance the document.
- Includes a focus statement that describes herself more fully (but doesn’t sound like a cliché) and zeros in on what the prospective employer is seeking.
- Drops the first-person *I* from this statement and follows the style of professional résumés.
- Writes brief, but dynamic, statements that fit on one page—without squeezing in irrelevant information.
- Lists her most current position using keywords (*filing systems, administrative support, conferences*) from the prospective employer’s job opening description.
- Uses dynamic verbs to begin the bulleted information (*provided, guided, maintained, scheduled, generated, managed, acted, transcribed*).
- Uses dates in her description of duties at IBM, showing the progression of increased responsibility.
- Inserts more keywords from the prospective employer’s job description in her work history at IBM.

FIGURE 3.2 *Mary Smith's "After" Chronological Résumé*

**Mary Eleanor Smith**  
**100 Lincoln Avenue, Ridgewood, NJ 07100**  
**Home (201) 670-1000 • Cell (201) 670-0001 • E-mail mxsmith@yahoo.com**

**PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:** Multitalented, team-oriented and experienced support person with excellent computer and marketing skills who can blend creative, interpersonal, and administrative skills that meet and exceed goals in both a Fortune 500 environment as well as a research organization

**2001-Present    Ridgewood Public Library, Ridgewood, NJ**  
*Assistant Librarian*

- Provide courteous and efficient service to patrons at large public library that is ranked one of the "busiest in county."
- Guide students as well as professionals in research.
- Maintain filing systems and provide backup support to technologist.
- Provide administrative support to library director.
- Schedule classes at Habernickel Technology Training Center.
- Generate publicity for events.

**1985-2001    IBM Corporation, White Plains, NY**  
**1998-2001    Assistant to Vice President of Marketing—North America**

- Arranged extensive travel arrangements, domestic and international.
- Coordinated and scheduled executive meetings.
- Managed heavy e-mail correspondence.
- Assumed major responsibility in planning and follow-up with staff.
- Acted as backup to the Americas Vice President's desk.
- Transcribed meeting minutes.
- Met tight deadlines and adept at multitasking.

**1993-1998    Marketing Programs Coordinator**

- Coordinated customer and sales force mailings.
- Produced brochure—supplying text and design—met deadlines.
- Maintained alumni and prospect databases.
- Managed extensive e-mailings to customer representatives.
- Ordered and maintained supplies.

**1985-1993    Executive Secretary to Director of Marketing—Latin America**

- Acted as liaison to Latin America assignees.
- Coordinated all travel schedules and reservations in the Americas.
- Arranged conference calls and meeting planning, with heavy calendaring.
- Teamed with other support personnel to maintain several databases.
- Acted as backup to Vice President of Marketing desk.
- Assisted in preparing agendas and reports for meetings.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING:** Selected consistently to attend workshops on time management, marketing, business writing at IBM. Completed HTML and Web Page Design courses at the Habernickel Technology Training Center.

**COMPUTER SKILLS:** Lotus Notes, Excel, Access, MS Word, WordPerfect. HTML. Familiarity with Adobe Illustrator, Adept at learning new computer skills.



- Drops the reference to her high school and instead accentuates her continuing professional educational development. (The job description says the candidate *should* have some college, not *must*.) The HTML and Web design classes were taken at the library, which is called the Habernickel Technology Training Center.
- Emphasizes her computer skills. Even though her knowledge of Adobe Illustrator (another keyword) is not substantial (she never used it on a daily basis at work nor does she have certification in it), she knows she is adept at learning most computer programs. Mary will enroll in a crash course while she continues her job search.

## REACH, DON'T SETTLE

In the recent “jobless recovery,” competition is stiff and employers are holding out for candidates who match their requirements exactly. But if your other skills are particularly strong, you should at least apply for a position, even if it is a reach. You never know. You may still get a chance to interview.

Mary has done her research, so she knows this job for which she applied would be a good fit for her. She pursues it, and even if she doesn't get an opportunity to interview for this specific position, she's going to keep this company in her job data file and apply for other openings at the company as they arise. Mary's résumé is in good shape now. All that is necessary is a slight revision for the next job posting to include new keywords and possibly a different objective.

Many Fortune 500 respondents encouraged job applicants to keep plugging away, even after a rejection. In other words, you shouldn't necessarily give up after the first try. Not only does your résumé stay in company databases for an extended period of time, but most Fortune 500 hiring professionals surveyed said they want to see a strong interest from the candidate in working at the company. Going out of your way to get the necessary training the next time you apply for a job is certainly a good indication of your interest in a particular company.

## THE FUNCTIONAL RÉSUMÉ

The functional résumé presents an applicant's skill set independently from a work history. Most experts suggest that you include a work history so that the recruiter doesn't think you are hiding important information (gaps in employment, limited experience, or short tenures at previous employers). In an article

on Monster.com, Norma Mushkat cited a survey of 2,500 recruiters done by ResumeDoctor.com in which the functional format was listed as one of the ten top peeves. In addition to these drawbacks, a functional format is more difficult to write.

Then why is an example of the functional format included in this book? Simply because it works well for those with unconventional work histories. Take a look at the “Before” and “After” examples in Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4, which apply to the following scenario.

Mikhail is a data processing consultant specializing in information technology. His background is varied and broad: He has worked as an independent consultant at 28 companies in his 30-year work history. Mikhail’s résumé is five pages long—and the chronological format of his “Before” résumé excessively details every assignment he ever had; much of the information is repetitive. When he discovered a position for a senior design analyst on a company Web site, he targeted his résumé for this specific opening. He decided to use a functional format and cut his résumé to two pages.

Although Mikhail knows it’s important to include at least a bare-bones listing of the companies he has worked for, he also knows a bulleted list of his top projects would work better than a detailed description of each job. Mikhail pares his résumé to two pages by listing all the companies in a separate section without the detailed descriptions of what he did at each company. Because the prospective employer is a technology firm, he wants to highlight his technical skills. If the company wants more detailed information about his earlier work history, it can refer to Mikhail’s Web site, where this information is presented in chronological order. Here is Mikhail’s résumé before he revised it.

FIGURE 3.3 *Mikhail’s Unrevised Résumé*

Mikhail Okdamir  
1 Palisade Avenue  
Union City, NJ 07100  
Business: (201) 866-1000  
Cell: (201) 866-0001

[www.okda.com](http://www.okda.com)

**SUMMARY**

Successful data processing professional with years of experience in various areas of information technology. Skilled technologist, organizer. Excellent writing and communication skills.

*(continued)*

FIGURE 3.3 (continued)

**SOFTWARE**

MQ, CICS, COBOL, COBOL II, LE COBOL, DB2, SPUFI, QMF, VSAM, DOS/VSE, MVS, IDMS, INTERTEST, Viasoft, Xpediter (batch and online), Macro CICS Assembler, Assembler, CEDF, ADS, Easy Test, File-AID, Library Management system, Panvalet, Librarian, Endeavor, TSO/SPF, ROSCOE, CMS, SDF, Debug, COMPAREX, MS Word, Visio, HTML, ABC FlowCharter, Windows 98

**EXPERIENCE**

May 2002-Dec 2002. **HIP NEW YORK. EPO/PPO.** Implementation of new health plan. PHCS Interface project that will expand HIP services beyond tri-state ten counties area. Provider Incentive Checks system. Coordinated interface process with Fleet Bank Interface system to clear Claims Benefits Checks (FTP). Developed technical specifications for Geriatrix system. Various supporting claim processing projects. Generated entries for General Ledger for Provider Incentive checks. Converted user requirements into programming specification. Scheduled new jobs and on request jobs. Coordinated implementation of jobs involving banks. Prepared technical documentation. Production support. Coding and testing.

**VSAM, CICS, COBOL, FTP, XPEDITER, JCL (batch and online)**

Nov 2000-May 2002. **MORGAN STANLEY INC.** Mutual funds support. Managed and supervised File Expansion project. Developed supporting documentation. Converted user requests into formalized programming specifications. Supported 12B1 process. Interfaced with Trust division that supplied input data for 12B1 process. Scheduled new jobs and ran on-request jobs. Prepared and wrote 12B1 Project overview. Generated vouchers for AP system. Balanced AP vouchers before production run. Followed up on daily production. Prepared reports on production problems for management. Conducted meetings with user to resolve various technical questions associated with requirements. Coding and testing of requested JCL and/or program changes.

**CICS, DB2, SPUFI, LE COBOL, COBOL II, MQ, VSAM, VIASOFT, INTERTEST, VISIO, TSO/SPF, JCL, MS WORD**

Feb 2000-Oct 2000. **BANK OF TOKYO/MITSUBISHI.** Maintained bank accounting system (IMMS). Constructed accounting vouchers. Developed technical specifications form user requirements. Advised user on usage of new online systems. Developed guidelines to reorganize VSAM files. Specifications for program and/or JCL changes presented for approval and walk through. Developed procedure to add new line printer for printing of checks. Installed supporting software. Coded, tested new programs, program enhancements and/or supporting JCL. Developed process to update and enhance system documentation.

**VSAM, DB2, CICS, INTERTEST, COBOL II, MVS/JCL, VISIO, MS WORD**

Apr 1997-Dec 1999. **DEAN WITTER REYNOLDS INC.** Mutual funds processing. Developed systems specification from user requirements. Developed backup procedures. Coded and tested major system components. Developed new programs. Participated in Y2K Remediation. Assisted in developing audit trails to prove completeness of Y2K changes. Instructed backup employee on 12B1 changes. Proposed audit trails to prove 12B1 process. Scheduled new jobs for production. Followed up on production moves. Generated proper journal entries for AP system. Balanced and proved voucher file before scheduled implementation. Testing and coding of various proprietary mutual fund programs and/or jobs. Assisted in installation of new developer supporting software (Viasoft).

**CICS, DB2, SPUFI, COBOL II, VSAM, VIASOFT, INTERTEST, TSO/SPF, JCL, MS WORD**

FIGURE 3.3 (continued)

Sept 1996-Mar 1997. **PAINE WEBBER INC.** Developed program specification for Taxlot reconciliation system. Ran ad hoc jobs to support user research. Input files were generated on UNIX platform. Assisted user in developing strategies to process data. All proposed changes presented to management for walk-through. Coded and tested programs and/or supported JCL. Developed required journal entries for AP system. Journals were balanced before added to production. Heavy user interface.

**CICS, COBOL II, VSAM, DB2, SPUFI, QMF, TSO/SPF, JCL, MS WORD**

Aug 1995-Aug 1996. **PERSHING CO.** Mutual fund support. Client support. Coded and tested major enhancement. Interfaced with users. Developed and prepared service requests for the program and/or JCL changes, which were presented to management for approval. Followed up with user on all new implemented changes. Resolved post implementation problems. Prepared required documentation and changes to user manuals. Tested and coded new programs and/or JCL. Scheduled new jobs for production. Verified jobs dependencies. Generated vouchers for company AP system. Balanced voucher file before production.

**CICS (Command), COBOL II, VSAM, DB2, QMF, TSO/SPF, XPEDITER, MS WORD**

Feb 1995-Aug 1995. **PETRIE RETAIL CO. SENIOR CONSULTANT.** Major enhancements in Fixed Asset System. Designed new approach to generated audit trails for AP system. Designed enhancements. Presented user with proposed changes. User presentations. Organized/suggested improvements for system documentation.

**CICS, VSAM, COBOL, ROSCOE, JCL**

Apr 1993-Feb 1995. **MEDCO CONTAINMENT CO. SENIOR CONSULTANT.** Designed online Formulary Rebate system. Prepared specifications for batch process. Prepared presentation for users. Developed screens and written programming specifications. Prepared/suggested improvements for system documentation. Assisted junior level programmers with Batch CICS debugging approaches. Coded new programs and/or new JCL streams and added the changes to existing processes. Tested and debugged. Interfaced with management in presentations and walk through.

**DB2, QMF, SPUFI, VSAM, CICS, COBOL II, MVS/JCL, TSO/SPF, XPEDITER, MS WORD**

Feb 1993-Apr 1993. **BROWN BROTHERS HARRIMAN. SENIOR CONSULTANT.** Developed programming specifications from user requests. Developed program documentation. Developed process to document program and/or JCL changes. Coded and tested all program and/or JCL changes. Maintained existing. Received and delivered system.

**CICS, VSAM, COBOL II, MVS/JCL, TSO/SPF**

Dec 1991-Jan 1993. **IBJ SCHRODER BANK. SENIOR CONSULTANT.** Designed and tested interface with IECA. Modified various online programs in Auctions System. Designed and implemented new reporting system for federal government. Applied vendor supplied fixes to Custody and Trust programs (Omnitrust). Journal entries.

**VSAM, COBOL II, CICS, ADABAS, MVS/JCL**

Sept 1991-Dec 1991. **GE INFORMATION SERVICES. SENIOR CONSULTANT.** Vendor. Presented new strategies for functional design approach. Implementation of Batch file transfer and Mailbox system for major investment bank. Coding and testing new programs and JCL.

**COBOL II, VSAM, CICS, INTEREST, MVS/JCL**

(continued)

Mikhail's résumé indicates that he is qualified and multitalented, consulting for 30 years as a programmer/analyst, but that many of his jobs were unrelated. Even though he worked primarily at financial services companies, he needs to point out this common thread in his long history. Mikhail examines the job posting for the new job.

**Senior Design Analyst:** with proven ability to analyze system components against project requirements and produce general design and program specifications. Must have strong verbal and written communication skills. Proven ability to lead large development projects through all phases of lifecycle with emphasis on testing component.

Extensive experience in IBM mainframe development, including: COBOL, MVS, JCL, Mainframe analysis and debugging tools, such as File-AID, Xpediter, etc. Experience with VM operating system a plus but not a requirement. Experience in Order Processing and/or Market Data systems a strong plus but not a requirement.

Mikhail takes note of certain keywords so that he can include them in his revised résumé. He has all of the qualifications necessary for the new position, but he will have to rearrange his key information to reflect that. Let's take a closer look at the "Before" résumé, section by section:

**Contact Information.** Name, address, and telephone and cell numbers are listed, and, in addition, Mikhail has included a URL to his Web site. He may want to rearrange the contact information so that it doesn't look so lopsided. A flush-left design works well for electronic transmittals of a résumé, but a more balanced distribution of Mikhail's contact information will save space. He will include an e-mail address in the "After" résumé.

**Focus Statement.** Mikhail's summary does not define the type of position he is seeking nor does it tell the employer what he has to offer. Instead, it is a tired description of just about any garden-variety programmer/analyst. Nothing in this statement stands out to grab an employer's attention. As with Mary's focus statement in her "Before" example, his target is too wide and doesn't anticipate what the employer needs. When he revises this focus statement, he will include keywords as well as highlight his expertise.

**Technical Summary.** Because Mikhail is a technology professional, he includes a technical summary so prospective employers don't have to search for this expertise. He lists only those programs and applications that he is prepared

to talk about in an interview. In the revised résumé, he will move the hardware reference into the technical summary with software.

**Professional Experience.** The chronological listing is too duty oriented. More emphasis should be placed on measurable outcomes, his leadership skills, and his problem-solving abilities. Throughout his career Mikhail supported, maintained, developed, designed, and implemented systems. The progression of responsibility is hard to find in his description of duties. Repositioning this information will make it easier to read, especially by HR professionals who may not have technical backgrounds. The hiring manager with a technical background can always refer to Mikhail's Web site for a more detailed and chronological description of his background.

**Educational Background.** Mikhail graduated with a degree from a foreign university but gives the U.S. equivalent (bachelor of science) so employers are not confused. He also lists his certifications, which are especially important for technologists, as they reveal that his knowledge of systems is current. Because he is not a recent graduate (within the last five years), it is not necessary to provide dates in this section. Mikhail has managed to pare the five-page résumé down to two pages using the functional format, emphasizing his skills and accomplishments. Now let's look at the "After" résumé.

Mikhail is a seasoned professional who fits nicely into the prospective employer's opening. He has whittled away the superfluous and repetition, cutting his five-page résumé down to two without sacrificing any key information. Here are the changes that made the difference.

- He uses an Arial font throughout—at full justification. The "After" résumé easily converts into an electronic version when necessary.
- He uses bullets and rules to separate and add balance.
- His focus statement is no longer run-of-the-mill. Instead, he picks up keywords from the prospective employer and inserts them into his own Qualifications Summary.
- His personal achievements are basically the same as they were in his chronological résumé, but now he opens his bulleted information with dynamic verbs (*defined, redesigned, planned, prepared, designed, participated, tested, developed, constructed, managed, and implemented*).
- His work history is included but in a separate section. It doesn't make sense for an independent contractor to make his work history the focus of the résumé.
- His hardware and software expertise are grouped together. Employers, especially technical or scientific ones, want to see that employees' skills are

FIGURE 3.4 *Mikhail's Revised Functional Résumé*

**Mikhail Okdamir**  
**1 Palisade Avenue**  
**Union City, NJ 07100**

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**Telephone: (201) 866-1000, Cell (201) 866-0001, E-mail: MO111@optonline.net**  
**Website: www.okda.com**

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**QUALIFICATIONS:**

Self-motivated and experienced senior design analyst with proven track record in design, testing, specifications, development, and enhancement of systems. Adept at solving complex technical problems and communicating to management or team leader status of assignment, including project timelines, issues, and contingencies. Highly skilled technologist with excellent communication and leadership skills can move projects through lifecycle in Financial Services sector

**TECHNICAL SUMMARY:**

**Software** MQ, CICS, COBAL COBAL II, LE COBAL, DB2, SPUFI, QMF, VSAM, DOS/VSE, MVS, IDMS, INTEREST, Viasoft, Xpediter (batch and online), Macro CICS Assembler, Assembler, CEDF, ADS, Easy Test, File-AID, Library Management system, Panvalet, Librarian, Endeavor, TSO/SPF, ROSCOE, CMS, SDF, Debug, COM-PAREX, MS Word, Visio, HTML, ABC FlowCharter, Windows 98.

**Hardware** IBM 303x, IBM 308x, IBM 43xx

**PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- Developed technical specifications and guidelines to reorganize VSAM files. Developed program specification for Taxlot reconciliation system. Developed and prepared service requests that were presented to management for approval.
- Managed and supervised File Expansion project while developing supporting documentation. Developed technical specifications.
- Defined software and hardware requirements for installation of transfer agent software. Interfaced with users. Coded and tested all program and/or JCL changes.
- Constructed accounting vouchers and maintained bank accounting system (IMMS). Coded and tested new programs to update and enhance system documentation. Developed supporting documentation.
- Planned and supervised conversion from DOS/VSE to MVS. Conducted technical interviews and assembled project team.
- Participated in Y2K remediation while assisting in developing audit trails to prove completeness of Y2K changes. Instructed backup employee on 12B1 changes. Interfaced with management in presentations and walk-through.

FIGURE 3.4 (continued)

- Designed new approach to generated audit trails for AP system. Designed enhancements and organized user presentations.
- Prepared specifications for batch process while assisting junior level programmers with Batch CICS debugging approaches. Coded new programs and/or new JCL streams and added changes to existing processes.
- Redesigned stock transfer and accounting systems while defining user requirements for CICS-based stock transfer system.
- Technical know-how needed for last three positions: VSAM, CICS, FTP, XPEDITER, JCL (batch and online) CICS, DB2, SPUFI, LE COBOL, COBOL II, MQ, VSAM, VIASOFT, INTERTEST, VISIO, TSO/SPF, JCL, MS WORD, MVS/JCL, VISIO, FILE-AID

#### **WORK HISTORY:**

**HIP (New York)** May 2002 to December 2002; **Morgan Stanley**, November 2000 to May 2002; **Bank of Tokyo/Mitsubishi**, February to October 2000; **Dean Witter Reynolds**, April 1997 to December 1999; **Paine Webber**, September 1996 to March 1997; **Pershing Co.**, August 1995 to August 1996; **Petrie Retail**, February 1995 to August 1995; **Medco Containment Company**, April 1993 to February 1995; **Brown Brothers Harriman**, February 1993 to April 1993; **IBJ Schroder Bank**, December 1991 to January 1993; **GE Information Services**, September 1991 to December 1991; **Lever Brothers**, June 1991 to September 1991; **Dresser Pump Industries**, April 1991 to June 1991; **Sharp Electronics**, June 1990 to April 1991; **IBM Professional Services**, February 1990 to June 1990; **Deutsche Bank**, October 1989 to February 1990; **Merrill Lynch Co.**, July 1989 to October 1989; **ADP Co.**, June 1989 to July 1989; **Drexel Burnham Lambert**, March 1989 to May 1989; **Bank of Tokyo**, September 1987 to February 1989; **Vista Concepts**, March 1987 to August 1987; **First Boston Co.**, May 1986 to March 1987; **First Jersey National Bank**, February 1986 to May 1986; **Shearson Lehman/American Express**, May 1985 to February 1986; **Spear, Leeds & Kellogg**, November 1984 to May 1985; **Bradford Trust**, August 1982 to November 1984; **Merrill Lynch**, July 1977 to June 1982; **Pershing Co.**, February 1974 to June 1977

#### **EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION:**

**IBM:** MQSeries Applications Programming (OS/390); MQSeries Introduction (OS/390)

**Online Software International:** CICS Command Level coding; CICS application design; CICS-VS debugging and internals

**Merrill Lynch:** Management training courses; BDAM Assembler Interface, CICS Macro Level coding (Assembler); MVS JCL; VSAM coding (Assembler)

**New York University:** Business programmer certificate; "C" language course  
Chubb Institute: Visual Basic 3.0

**University of Economics, Ljubljana, Slovenia:** Degree in Business Administration and Management (Bachelor of Science equivalent)



current. In his “Before” résumé, it was evident that Mikhail had used certain computer languages recently and that’s why it was necessary for him to supplement this information in the certification section.

- All relevant information is accessible and accurate. Mikhail double-checks the spelling of technical information by Googling all hardware and software terminology.
- The functional format is logical and purposeful, exhibiting balance, consistent pattern, and good design.
- Finally, this “After” résumé is much easier to read because Mikhail has eliminated irrelevant information and cut the five pages down to two while still retaining important keywords.

Now you have to decide which format works best for your work history. Even though a chronological format is preferred by hiring professionals, some work histories just won’t fit this mold, calling for a functional format instead. Whichever one you choose, though, make sure your résumé conforms to these guidelines.

- Double-check for accuracy. Run it through the spell checker—twice. Ask for objective feedback from outsiders. Your sentences should be direct and brief. Do not exceed two pages in length unless absolutely necessary.
- Make sure you emphasize your accomplishments rather than your responsibilities.
- All of your dates should be accurate and specific.
- Include all contact information, including an e-mail address.
- Make sure you are qualified for the position you are applying for.

## WHAT DO EMPLOYERS WANT?

Knowing what an employer wants helps you to design your résumé so that it reflects the employer’s needs. To paraphrase a particularly helpful summary of what is typically valued by employers, reported in Susan Britton Whitcomb’s book *Résumé Magic* (see “Resources” at end of book), your résumé should illustrate that you can help a company to make money, save time, make work easier, be more competitive, build relationships, expand business, attract new customers, and/or retain customers. If your résumé exhibits these eight qualities (or at least a few of them), you have a good shot at getting that interview.