

The iHire Resume Writing Playbook



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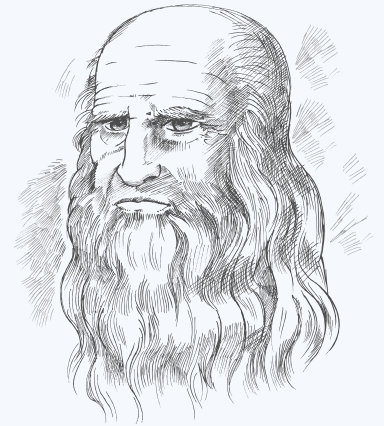
WELCOME TO RESUME WRITING 101

When was the last time you updated your resume?

Unless you're a frequent job-hopper, are making a career change, or were recently laid off, it's likely been a while. But don't worry – you've come to the right place, even if you've never written a formal resume.

Writing a resume involves more than creating a bulleted list of your previous positions and professional achievements with your name and contact information at the top. When the average hiring manager spends about six seconds reviewing each resume, you have to make a great first impression, fast. Atop that, your resume must contain the right keywords to sail past applicant tracking systems (ATS) used by most large employers to initially screen applicants (more on this later).

For more than 20 years, iHire has been connecting candidates like you with great careers. One of the ways we do this is by helping job seekers write winning resumes. Now, we'd like to share some of our best kept secrets with you. This eBook will guide you through the basics of developing a polished, modern resume that will help you land your next exciting career opportunity.



Did you know...?

Leonardo da Vinci is credited with creating the first known resume in 1482. Searching for work, da Vinci wrote a letter listing his wartime skills (including his abilities to remove water from trenches and create catapults) and sent it to Ludovico il Moro, the Duke of Milan.

THREE TYPES OF RESUME STRATEGIES

Before we get too deep into resume best practices, we'll need to define the three types of modern resume writing strategies:

1. **Chronological:** also known as the traditional resume
2. **Functional:** sometimes referred to as the skills-based resume
3. **Hybrid:** otherwise known as the combination resume because it is a mash-up of the other two strategies



These formats highlight (or downplay) different aspects of your career in order to best depict you as a great fit for a job. The critical thing to keep in mind when writing your resume is that your career objective should determine the type of resume format you choose and the content your resume contains.

Now, let's look at each type of resume.

STEPHEN J. SMITH

555-555-5555 ■ stephen.smith@gmail.com ■ 123 Main Street, City, State 12345

EXECUTIVE CHEF

Summary: Talented and award-winning Chef with 20+ years of experience in the hospitality industry and track record of success guiding high-volume culinary operations for casinos, hotels, resorts, and fine dining restaurants. Effective manager with history of boosting sales/revenue, improving profitability, and enhancing quality and guest satisfaction. Proven abilities executing HR tasks including hiring/recruiting, training, and supervising back-of-house (BOH) as well as front-of-house (FOH) staff. Additional entrepreneurial background with exceptional financial acumen and strengths in purchasing, strategic planning, and business development. *Skills include:*

Inventory & Cost Control ■ Menu Creation/Design ■ Sanitation & Food Safety ■ P&L Analysis ■ Performance Evaluation
Catering & Event Planning ■ Budget Administration ■ Financial Reporting ■ Regulatory Compliance
Guest Service ■ Vendor Relations ■ Leadership & Teambuilding ■ MICROS ■ JDE ■ CtuIt

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE & ACHIEVEMENTS

ABC Country Club ■ City, State 2016–Present
Executive Chef

Enlisted by former F&B Director of XYZ Resort and Casino to replace Michelin star chef and elevate member experience at private country club. Preside over all F&B operations encompassing 3 main kitchens, pool service, and banquets/catering. Report to Clubhouse Manager/GM and serve on executive committee.

- Turned around negative membership perception of F&B department by implementing several new policies/procedures including temp logs, line check sheets, performance reviews, guest comment cards, and other systems focused on improving quality and consistency.
- Increased à la carte revenue 60% by introducing seasonal and local nightly specials as well as fine dining menu that changes on monthly basis.
- Developed all new banquet and events menus, boosting member interest by transitioning away from traditional buffet banquets and instituting action stations with small plates.

XYZ Resort & Casino ■ City, State 2014–2016
Executive Chef & Executive Steward

Recruited by ex GM of DEF Resort and Casino to help launch the largest Indian gaming casino in the western US, maintaining F&B and sanitation responsibilities for entire property. Interviewed and hired 200 sanitation and culinary staff for multiple outlets including 24-hour café and team dining room, fine dining steakhouse, Starbucks, ice cream shop, 8 food court units, and banquets/catering department.

- Played key role in pre-opening and successful casino launch, facilitating growth of F&B revenue to \$40M+ per year:
 - Created culinary guide and monthly rotating menu for 24-hour, scratch-based team dining room serving 5,000 covers per day.
 - Established all F&B and sanitation SOPs.
 - Set par levels for F&B-related products and sanitation supplies and organized onsite warehouse to maximize efficiency and ease of access.

ABC Catering & DEF Express BBQ ■ City, State 2012–2014
Owner/Executive Chef

Built catering business and BBQ operation from the ground up. Planned/executed events with up to 1,500 attendees at colleges throughout the Inland Empire. Secured contract to run café at University College, preparing financial forecasts and maintaining budget. Handled catered functions with 20–200 people for DEF Express BBQ division and manned retail booths at local farmers' markets selling BBQ sauces and organic spice rub. Hired and led 4-member staff.

- Won 2013 BBQ Pitmaster Contest-Inland Empire.

1. CHRONOLOGICAL

The most commonly used resume format, the **chronological resume**, is a listing of your work history with detailed job descriptions and accomplishments for each position. Although it is called the chronological format, your employment history will be listed in reverse-chronological order, beginning with the current or most recent position and moving backward.

The chronological layout is best for job seekers who have had a steady career progression within the same (or similar) industry and quantifiable achievements in each role. This organizational approach puts the focus squarely on where you have worked, the tasks you performed, and the contributions you made for each employer.

The primary benefit of using the chronological format is that it is easy to follow. It also incorporates a natural progression from the summary paragraph to the professional experience section and beyond.

Sample Chronological Resume

John Doe

555-555-5555 / email@email.com

123 Main Street, City, State 11111

Optometrist

Highly effective and dedicated professional with proactive, service-driven approach reinforced by 5+ years' experience in optometry. Highly perceptive individual with ability to quickly assess patients' conditions and determine/prescribe appropriate products. Effective multi-tasker who thrives in busy, fast-paced environments. Respected team player known for willingness to go the extra mile to deliver the best in service and care.

Patient Care...Quality Assurance...Inventory Control...Patient Evaluation/Diagnosis...Documentation
Treatment Planning...Problem Resolution...Customer Service...Refractions...Ocular Allergy

Professional Highlights

- Subcontract professional services to well-known doctor, traveling to several ABC Company locations in City area to complete eye exams.
- Work with up to 20 patients per day, prescribing needed lenses and fitting individuals for contact lenses.
- Assisted with optometric operations within growing practice, conducting refractions, diagnosing ocular pathology, and treating ocular allergies and inflammations; successfully removed corneal foreign body.
- Provided superior customer service as Examining Doctor; indirectly supervised approximately 4 opticians and trainees, monitoring individual performance.
- Diagnosed, treated, and followed up with patients at 500-bed hospital as General Medical Officer; updated and maintained accurate and confidential documents.

Career Timeline

ABC Company, City, State 2003–Present
Examining Doctor (2009–Present)
Optometric Examining Doctor (2003–2009)

*Additional experience as **General Medical Officer** for ABC Medical Center, City, State*

Education & Professional Credentials

M.D., State University, City, State
B.S. in Medical Science, State University, City, State
B.A. in Pre-Med, State University, City, State
Ophthalmology Residency Certificate of Completion, State University, City, State
Internship Certificate of Completion, State University, City, State
State and State Physician and Surgeon Licenses

2. FUNCTIONAL

Job seekers whose work history is outdated, spotty, repetitive, or unrelated to their objective are best served by a **functional resume**. By including a career highlights section paired with a very brief employment history that only lists previous positions, employers, and dates of employment, you emphasize your accomplishments, qualifications, and key skills.

This type of layout effectively downplays career progression and allows the strategic ordering of the highlights section for maximum impact without being bound by chronology. By drawing the reader's attention to your top achievements, the goal is to wow potential employers enough for them to excuse or forgive any skeletons or gaps in your career history.

Although the functional resume format enables a job seeker to present their work history in the most flattering way possible, it has drawbacks. A large proportion of hiring managers and recruiters are turned off by the functional format and immediately assume that an applicant has something to hide in their background. For this reason, the functional strategy should only be used only when absolutely necessary.

Sample Functional Resume

JANE JONES

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CUSTOMER SERVICE SPECIALIST

Summary: Highly motivated, dedicated, and solutions-oriented professional with extensive experience providing outstanding customer service and track record of success in wide-ranging sales roles. Exceptional communicator, creative problem solver, and valued team member able to quickly establish rapport with customers. Expert multitasker who thrives in fast-paced environments, meets demanding objectives, and exceeds expectations. Proficient user of MS Office Suite, CRM systems, and social media. *Strengths include:*

Account Management • Event Planning • Customer Relations/Retention • Closing & Upselling • Coaching/Mentoring
Product & Service Knowledge • Scheduling • Workflow Planning • Data Entry • Report Generation

SELECTED CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- As Membership Development Director for ABC University Club, built department from the ground up and leveraged knowledge and connections as lifelong Portlander to develop rapport with members, change club culture, and increase its profile/relevance within the local community.
- Revitalized advertising sales for ABC Week Newspaper, utilizing prospecting skills to capture clients in a number of new categories including automotive, healthcare, and national chains.
 - Created highly lucrative political database, generating substantial revenue from digital advertising promoting ballot measures and individual candidates.
 - Recognized as first Account Executive to bill \$80K in a single month (average monthly billing was \$45K).
- Played vital role in launch of Portland Monthly Magazine, using extensive knowledge of Portland market to identify target demographics and expanding sales revenue by 20% from 2004 to 2009.
- Brought in significant amount of new business for The Columbian Publishing Co. by establishing database of potential clients in the Portland metroplex, primarily in the arts and events space.
- Contributed to successful introduction of new free weekly newspaper, Portland Tribune, closing deals with national accounts such as Ford and Wells Fargo Bank that historically did not advertise in free publications.
- As Senior Account Executive/Special Projects Manager for The Business Journal, boosted company revenue in multiple categories 15% to 18% on annual basis.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ABC University Club, City, State 2017–2020
Membership Development Director

Provided sales and marketing expertise for private social club with approximately 600 members. Promoted club benefits and organized networking events for prospects and current members. Managed club database and formed business relationships throughout the Portland market. Created and oversaw club events.

- Increased membership signups from 1–2 new members per month to 5 new members per month on average.

DEF Publishing Co., City, State 2014–2017
Multimedia Account Manager

Supplied broad sales experience for daily newspaper covering Clark County and City with circulation of ~34K readers. Administered/expanded existing accounts and prospected/closed new business. Collaborated with clients on advertisements, partnering with creative personnel and providing input on materials and strategies.

- Within 2 months of hiring, surpassed monthly sales goal by 25%, a rare accomplishment for a new sales representative.

3. HYBRID

Combining the best aspects of the chronological and functional formats, a **hybrid resume** incorporates a career highlights section and a detailed employment history section. This enables you to choose a select few achievements or key areas of expertise to display in the career highlights section, followed by a traditional professional experience section that provides in-depth information for each of your previous roles.

This is a great strategy for job seekers who want to tout achievements from earlier in their career or wish to mention top accomplishments or critical projects in a more prominent area. Using the hybrid format also puts the focus on your significant contributions as well as the specific duties and responsibilities you've held throughout your career.

Sample Hybrid Resume

One of the hybrid format's greatest strengths is its flexibility. This versatile approach can be used in a variety of situations for candidates at any stage in their careers, including:



RECENT GRADUATES with minimal experience in their fields can benefit from using the hybrid strategy to tout their educational projects and internship experience.



JOB SEEKERS WITH EXTENSIVE BACKGROUNDS and a long list of achievements can use the hybrid format to emphasize the accomplishments that best suit the position they're applying for.



INDIVIDUALS WITH NOTABLE SUCCESSES FROM EARLY ON IN THEIR CAREERS can use a highlights section to get that information in a far more prominent position.



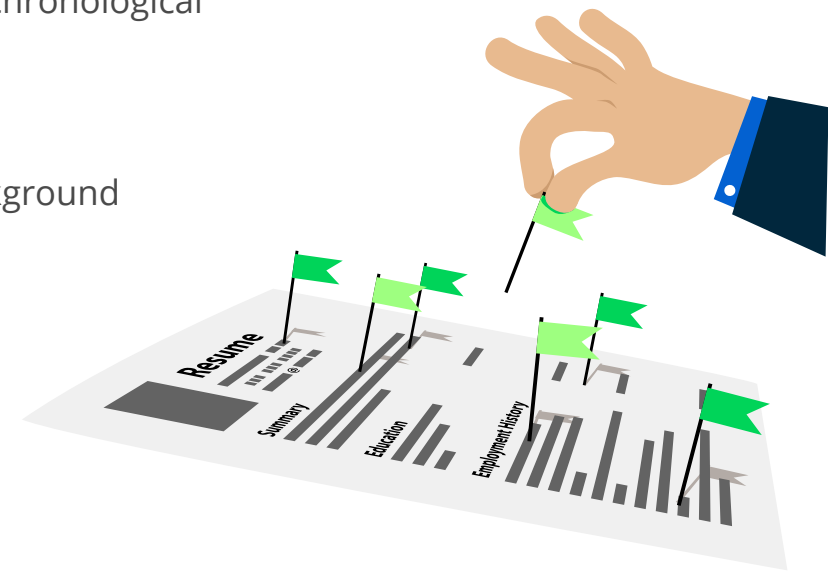
CAREER CHANGERS CAN SHINE A LIGHT ON THEIR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS and accomplishments that translate to their new field or industry.

Like the functional format, the hybrid strategy gives you more control over the placement of some of your information and provides an effective way to demonstrate the value you can bring to an organization.

WHICH OF THE THREE MODERN RESUME STRATEGIES SHOULD I USE?

Consider your overall objective when deciding which resume strategy to use. If you are changing careers, you may be best served by a functional or hybrid resume, but if you have a steady work history and aren't looking to make a major change, the chronological resume format would be the best route.

Think carefully about your goals and the elements of your professional background that will work to your advantage. Always remember: the resume is a marketing document intended to sell your skills and experience to potential employers, so present your information in a way that will minimize any weaknesses and promote your greatest strengths.



ANATOMY OF A RESUME



Now that you're familiar with the three main types of modern resumes, we'll narrow in on specific sections you must include. Here, we'll look at a chronological resume, as it is the most commonly used.

Section 1: Title and Summary

Your title and summary sit at the top of your resume and are likely the first thing a hiring manager will read. Resume title and summary sections tend to do a much better job at marketing yourself as a qualified candidate than traditional objective statements. That's because objective statements focus on the what, while summaries focus on the why. Employers already know what you want – a job – and are more interested in why they should consider you for their open position.

Your summary section is your elevator pitch – a brief, excitement-generating introductory paragraph that outlines who you are and what you have to offer.

In an objective statement, you might say, "I am looking for an administrative assistant position that will utilize my organizational skills." Instead, make your resume title "Administrative Assistant" and start making your case in the summary section. For example, "Highly knowledgeable administrative professional with 5+ years of experience and outstanding organizational skills."

EXAMPLE:

Highly talented Executive Chef with more than 13 years of prestigious fine dining experience and proven success exceeding standards of service and guest satisfaction. Respected manager proficient in directing and training employees to boost workplace morale. Exceptional financial acumen with strengths in revenue control and forecasting. Valued contributor to startups with demonstrated history in improving team performance and streamlining labor activities to boost efficiency.

Expertise includes:

Inventory/Food Service Management • Kitchen Safety
Leadership Development • Sanitation • BOH/FOH Operations
Food Cost Controls • Menu Planning/Pricing • Vendor Sourcing
New Establishment Startup

Computer Skills:

MICROS, JDE Systems, Ctuit Software, Aloha, Infogenesis POS



Section 2: Core Competencies

If you've ever applied to a position that you were well qualified for and received an automated disqualification email less than 24 hours later, chances are your resume didn't make it past the applicant tracking system (ATS) scan. Without the right keywords in your resume, your document may never make it to the hiring manager's desk. Luckily, your core competencies section gives you the opportunity to include those keywords (and we'll talk more about ATS technology in the next chapter).

The core competencies section is where you'll list your key skills and strengths, and it should fit right in with your title and summary on the top half of your first page. Here's how to list core competencies in a resume:

1. Scan the job ad you're applying for and gather a list of skills and key phrases that are mentioned in the posting.
2. Select around 10 keywords from the list that highlight your top skills and areas of expertise. The ATS will scan your entire document, so your list doesn't need to be comprehensive.
3. Arrange them in a visually appealing way (remember, a human will be reading your resume after the ATS does).

EXAMPLE:

Summary: Highly experienced, energetic, and solutions-focused professional with diverse background in administrative and customer service positions. Exceptionally organized with track record of success in fast-paced settings, enthusiasm for improving processes, and reputation for saving time, reducing costs, and increasing quality. Expert multitasker and excellent interpersonal communicator; bilingual in English and Spanish.

Key Strengths:

Staff Training & Support • Scheduling
Project Management • Filing/Recordkeeping
Domestic & International Travel Arrangements
Sales & Marketing • Web Design • Workflow Control
Data Entry & Reporting • Event Planning • SAP
MS Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook)



Section 3: Professional Experience

The professional experience section of a resume explains where you've worked, why you were hired, what you did there, and why it mattered. While the professional experience section must include your job duties and level of responsibility, it should also highlight your accomplishments.

To write the professional experience section of your resume:

1. List your past positions in reverse-chronological order – most recent at the top.
2. Present previous jobs in past tense and current jobs in present tense.
3. Include brief company descriptions to give employers an idea of the different environments you've worked in – number of employees, industry, competitive ranking, yearly revenue, etc.
4. If you're worried about being a victim of ageism, only include jobs you've held within the past 10 years. If you'd like to highlight jobs you had more than 10 years ago, put them under "Additional Experience" and remove the dates.
5. Keep your job duties and responsibilities paragraph concise. Employers are most interested in the results of your efforts.
6. Bullet only your accomplishments so they jump off the page and catch the reader's attention.
7. In your bullets, include facts and figures to further illustrate your positive impact.

EXAMPLE:

Team Leader/Customer Service Representative
Hired by manager to boost morale, improve productivity, increase customer satisfaction, and repress team member absence. Supervise 14 customer service representatives assisting more than 4.5K local customers regarding technical questions, account usages, email glitches, and smartphone replacements. Monitor staff performance and procedure compliancy to ensure quick resolution for problems that arise.

- Increased customer satisfaction levels from 35% to 89%
- Lowered staff absenteeism from 20% to 2% by introducing reward incentives and weekly open forum meetings to improve workplace morale.
- Enhanced employee productivity by 30% in 6 months by dedicating one team member to cleanse customer service database of old, repetitive information and update new records.



Section 4: Supplemental Information

Extra details, like your education, training, memberships, licenses, and volunteer experience, can help you stand out as a candidate and deserve a place on your resume. Generally, supplemental information on your resume belongs at the end. However, keep in mind, not all of that information will apply to you, and where you place them depends on many factors. For example, if you are a recent graduate, your education should be on the top half of your resume. If you have impressive credentials that most of your competition can't offer, like a dual certification, you should highlight them at the beginning of your resume. Here are some of the common supplemental sections, tips on what to include in them, and examples of how to present them in your resume.

Education

This is a popular section but will be presented differently depending on your situation. Here's how to list education on your resume:

- Include your degree, major, and college/university name and location. Only include your graduation year if you graduated recently.
- Include your GPA if it was 3.8 or higher.
- Highlight honors, awards, scholarships, leadership activities, and/or community involvement.
- If you're a recent graduate, you can mention a couple relevant courses you completed.
- If you didn't graduate or are working on your degree, you can still mention the degree by adding "Coursework" or "Candidate" and an expected graduation date.

EXAMPLE:

EDUCATION:

University of Maryland University College, *Shady Grove, MD*

Bachelor of Science in Cyber Security

Estimated date of completion – May 2019

Professional Memberships

If you play an active role in an organization that highlights skills or industry expertise relevant to the job you're applying for, put professional memberships on your resume. Use the following guidelines:

- Include the organization's name and your title (if something other than "Member").
- If you are not currently a member but still want to put the professional membership on your resume, give the start/end years or list "Former Member."
- Mention specific contributions, such as fundraising or event planning.

EXAMPLE:

AFFILIATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

Bay Area Concierge Association

- Served in numerous leadership positions for this all-volunteer association including Treasurer, Secretary, Vice President, and President. Spearheaded the creation of website and newsletter as well as development of scholarship fund for hospitality major at San Diego College.
- Established associate membership program, expanding membership to restaurants and tourist sites.

Women in Tourism

- Active board member since 2008 for this association promoting education and networking for women in the tourism industry. Initiated fundraising efforts for CASA (Center for Spousal Abuse).
 - Coordinated and hosted 2008 silent auction for Habitat for Humanity.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce

Orchestrated cross-promotional efforts with Los Angeles Concierge Association.

Member of PTA for Oakes Elementary & Catalina Middle Schools

Volunteer for SPCA, PARC, CASA, Habitat for Hummanity, & Rotary Club of San Diego

Training and Professional Development

This section can be a great way to supplement your work experience, especially for career changers and recent graduates. Here's what we suggest:

- Training and professional development can be included with education, but make sure the section doesn't become too lengthy.
- Include the course/seminar/workshop title, instructor/sponsoring organization, and year.

Certifications, Licensure, and Other Professional Credentials

If the job you're applying for requires certain certification or licenses, this section is critical. It can also be a great way to set yourself apart from other candidates. We recommend the following:

- Only list active/current credentials. If you want to include a past certification or license, make sure you designate "inactive" or "not current."
- Order your credentials by significance – for example, a national board certification in nursing would go above CPR or first aid.
- Display license number if applicable. The hiring manager will most likely search for it on an online database anyway.

EXAMPLE:

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Degree type: University name, City, State

Python, NumPy, Pandas, Matplotlib - Udemy

Machine Learning A-Z; Hands-on Python & R in Data Science
(in progress) - Udemy

Licensure

Series 7 and 63 (inactive)

EXAMPLE:

PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS & LICENSURE:

Registered Nurse Licenses – Maryland & Pennsylvania

ACLS & BLS Certifications – American Heart Association

Member: American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN)

Volunteer Experience

Volunteer experience can be especially beneficial to industries such as pharmacy, healthcare, social work, or education. It not only demonstrates involvement within the community, but also calls out work you've accomplished in addition to internships, clinical rotations, or field work. Here are some tips for including volunteer work on your resume:

- Only include experiences that are relevant to the job you're applying for.
- Highlight accomplishments and skills that you developed.
- Include the dates and locations of your volunteer work.



EXAMPLE:

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Presbyterian Church — Frederick, MD

Provided influenza and various immunizations in church clinic annually.

Medical Mission Outreach — Frederick, MD

Supplied free prescriptions and OTC medications alongside medical team members to 1,900 patients.



Section 5: Additional Experience

Including an additional experience section on a resume allows you to list old jobs and mention irrelevant positions without taking the focus away from your career objective.

Job seekers often wonder how many jobs should be on a resume, but that all depends on your career. The number of positions you've held is not as important as the quantifiable achievements you can claim and the contributions you've made in each role. Using an additional experience section is a great way to mention jobs that aren't as relevant or were from a long time ago without adding substantial length to your resume.

For senior professionals with careers that span decades, it's still essential to focus on the last 10–15 years of your work history. If you have significant accomplishments from earlier in your career, consider using a hybrid resume strategy to highlight that information in a more prominent area of your resume. The hybrid resume also works for professionals who have had many short-term positions as it downplays job-hopping.



How to Incorporate an Additional Experience Section

When choosing how to list old or irrelevant jobs on a resume, the most important thing to consider is how it may affect your career timeline. Including an additional experience section on a resume is mostly meant for early career roles from many years ago, but when using this strategy to downplay irrelevant positions, you'll need to be sure it won't create the appearance of an employment gap.

For this reason, you may need to include some less-than-relevant positions in your professional experience section, but only if leaving them off would make it seem like you were out of work for a significant period. Otherwise, feel free to move those positions to an additional experience section (or simply cut them altogether if they really don't add anything to the document).

Formatting the additional experience section on a resume is simple and there are only a few variations to consider.

EXAMPLES:

Single-line Additional Experience Section

*Additional experience as **Project Manager** for ABC Construction Company, City, State and **Site Superintendent** for DEF Constructors, City, State*

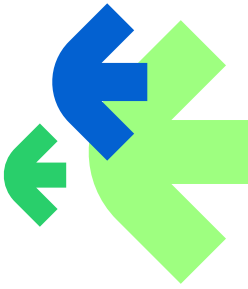
Multi-line Additional Experience Section

Additional Experience:

***Project Manager** – ABC Construction Company, City, State
Site Superintendent – DEF Constructors, City, State*

Previous Positions with the Same Company

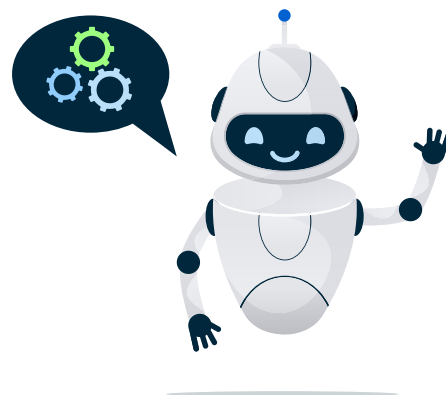
*Previous positions with ABC Construction Company include **Project Manager, Site Superintendent, and Carpenter***



WHAT'S AN ATS AND HOW DO I GET PAST IT?

At some point in your job search, you've probably experienced the applicant "black hole:" you submitted your resume for a position that seemed like it was tailored for your skills and experience. Yet, you never heard anything back from the employer. Welcome to the world of applicant tracking systems (ATS). These software programs were designed to make the hiring process smoother for employers and HR staff by filtering out approximately 75% of the resumes submitted for a position.

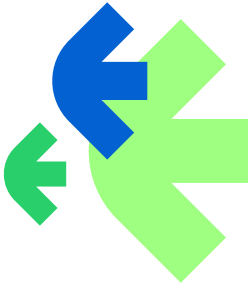
An ATS works by scanning resumes for a set of keywords identified by the hiring manager and functions as an initial screening tool – it analyzes titles, dates, and descriptions to determine if a resume matches the employer's requirements. If it does, the document will be reviewed by a human who will decide whether to call the applicant for an interview. If the resume does not pass the ATS scan, you're going to need to continue your job search.



To maximize your ability to make it past an ATS, follow these best practices when crafting your resume:

- Include keywords! The best way to select which keywords to include is to review the original job ad – identify important words and phrases from the job description and requirements and work them into your resume.
- Ensure your name and contact information is listed at the top of the first page (and not in the header), along with a summary paragraph and a list of skills/qualifications.
- Keep the formatting simple – use standard fonts such as Arial, Tahoma, and Verdana, and avoid text boxes, graphics, and logos.
- Never submit a scanned document (the ATS cannot parse the text).

By understanding what it takes to get past an ATS, you can turn this roadblock into an advantage – if you take the time to customize your resume with the right keywords.



INCORPORATING KEYWORDS

As mentioned previously, you'll need to include the right keywords if you want your resume to make it past an ATS. Generally, keywords are the qualifications, duties, and skills an ideal candidate would hold and/or have demonstrated in the past. They should include your hard and soft skills, education, and relevant experience.

But how do you know which keywords to include? The job description for the position for which you're applying is the best place to start. After all, it is where employers directly tell you much of what they are looking for in a candidate.

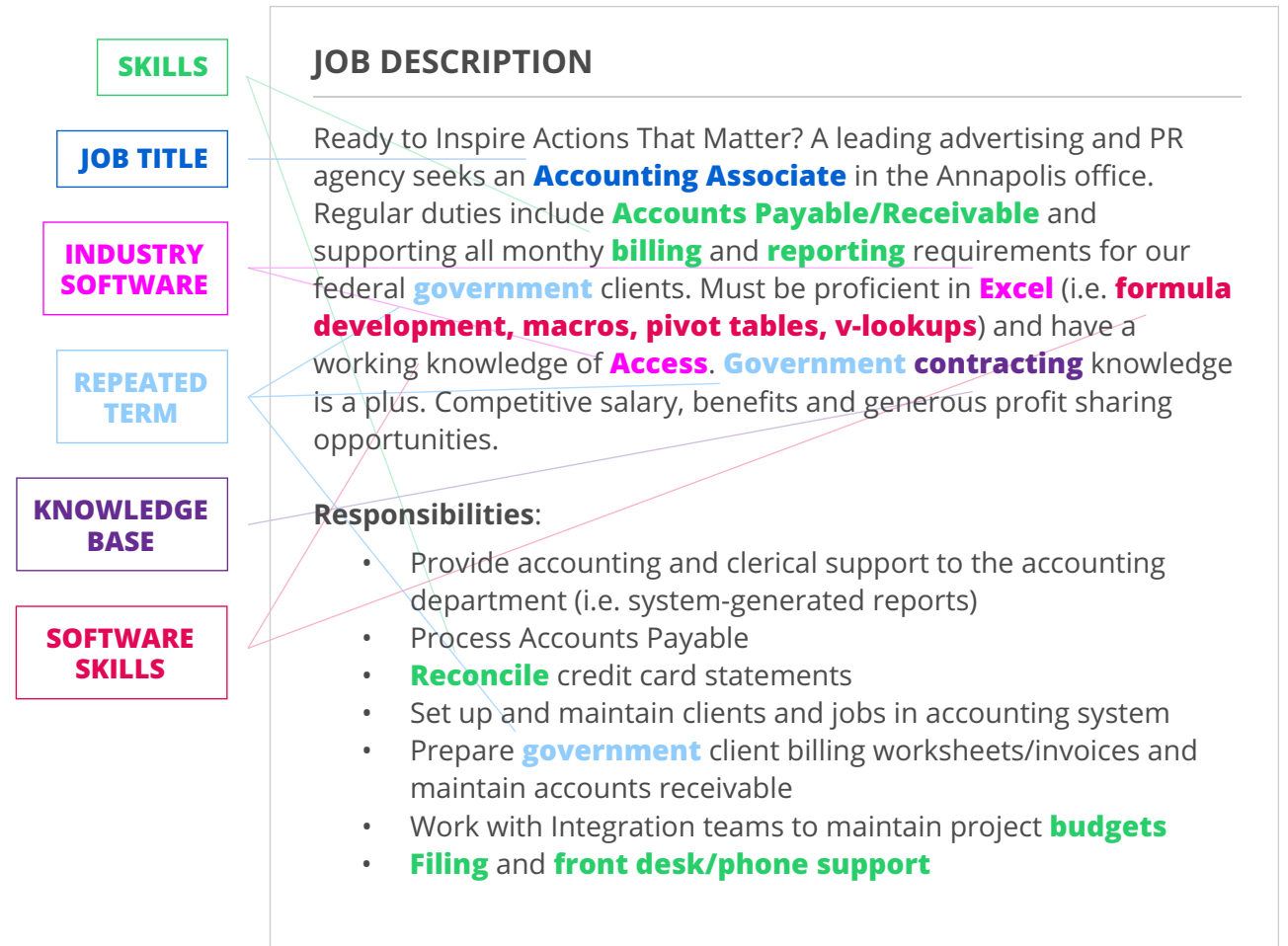
Typically, when you see one of these expressions in a job ad, it means there's a keyword involved:

- _____ experience or experience with _____
- Background
- Knowledge of _____
- Ability to _____
- Must _____
- Authorized/Certified/Licensed
- Names of industry-specific tools or software
- Action verbs (ex: supervise or build), particularly in the job duties/responsibilities section

Now, let's look at a sample job ad for an Accounting Associate. The keywords called out in the following image are those you should include in your resume if you were applying for this position:



Check that you maintain the same wording when you're integrating key terms into your resume. And if you use an acronym, make sure that the first instance includes the entire phrase followed by the abbreviation.





HOW TO UPDATE YOUR RESUME

Oftentimes, your resume isn't in need of an entire facelift and simply requires a few updates. But where do you start – especially if it's been years since you last looked at your resume? To get the wheels turning, ask yourself the following questions to bring your resume up to speed.



Have you held any new positions?

Start with your work history and add in any new position(s) you've held since you last made updates. Double check the dates in your career history and be sure to change the details for previous roles from present tense to past tense.



Do you have any new skills, qualifications, or credentials to add?

Did you earn a new license or certification? Master a new skill? Learn a new language? Add these items and remove outdated or irrelevant skills to make room for the more important details.



Have you recently completed any training courses?

Lifelong learners are attractive to hiring managers. Demonstrate your enthusiasm for professional development by listing the latest training courses you've taken. These can include free massive open online courses (MOOCs) or other self-directed classes, as long as they are relevant to your career.



Have your current job responsibilities evolved?

If you haven't changed jobs since you last worked on your resume, make sure the information included for your current role is correct and up to date. Don't sell yourself short if your present position has evolved (especially if this evolution shows growth in responsibilities).



What have you accomplished lately in your current position?

Similar to the point above, to add recent accomplishments and major projects you've completed. Make sure your resume shows that you're a constant achiever – a strong resume must include measurable results.



Have you recently volunteered your expertise for any community organizations?

Serving your community looks great on a resume and can be excellent interview material. Be sure to add any new volunteer activities, especially if you've held leadership roles or positions where your industry expertise was involved.



Does your resume follow the latest best practices in resume writing?

Once you have the latest and greatest information in place, make sure your document's overall strategy will work for you in today's market. If you haven't looked for a job in years, what worked back then doesn't necessarily work now. Read up on modern resume writing tips (like those in this eBook!) and adjust your document's content and format accordingly.



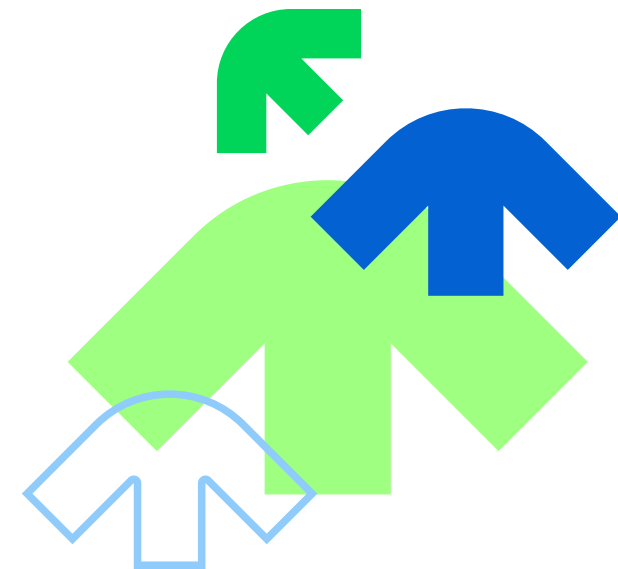
Has anyone else reviewed your resume lately?

To ensure you have not only a better resume but a perfect resume, have several trusted colleagues review it. Find someone to read it from the hiring manager's perspective and enlist someone else to proofread it solely for spelling and grammar.

Bonus tip: update these extras, too.

Once you're finished updating your resume, don't forget about these supporting materials (if applicable):

- Cover letter(s)
- Executive bio
- Project/work sample portfolio
- References list
- Salary history
- LinkedIn profile
- Facebook, Twitter, and other social media accounts





CREATING A CAREER CHANGE RESUME

If you're changing careers and breaking into a new and unfamiliar industry, you're going to need a new resume. Even after you've taken courses to build your knowledge and formed a new professional network to support you in your budding career, convincing hiring managers to choose you over candidates with work experience in the sector is tricky.

With the right strategies, however, you can position yourself just as well (or better!) as other job seekers. Here are a few tips and tricks for crafting a career change resume that will show off what you can bring to the table.



Choose Your Resume Format

The best resume formatting strategies for transitioning into a new industry are functional and hybrid resumes. These two approaches allow you to keep the employer's sights on your skills and the value you bring to the organization beyond your (somewhat unrelated) professional, paid experience. Check out the resume examples on page 6 and 7 to determine which of the two routes is right for you.





Highlight Unpaid Experience

Even without a paid background in your prospective industry, there are plenty of ways to get involved and integrate relevant experience into your resume. Volunteering for a nonprofit, for example, is a great way to build a professional network and develop necessary skills before you make a career change.

You can also add any courses or training you've taken to prepare yourself for your new occupation. Including your education will not only reassure employers that you've committed to your career change and have the knowledge you need to succeed, but also that you are proactive and willing to learn.



Focus on Skills

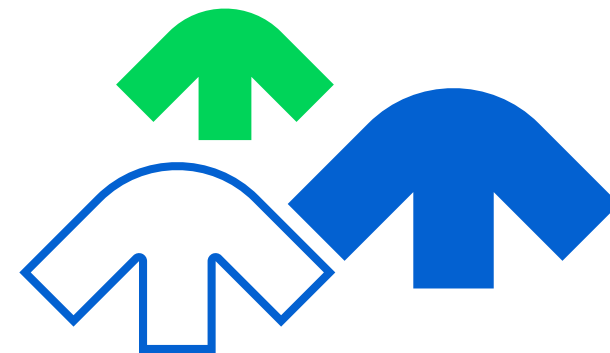
Have you ever heard of “transferable skills?” These are the abilities you will use in your new job, even though you originally learned them while working in a different sector. Unlike other candidates applying for this position, you do not have relevant paid experience. However, you do have the necessary skills—which your resume must demonstrate.



Keep It Relevant

Remember to keep the focus on what will matter to hiring managers in your new industry. What was impressive to others in your previous industry may not be nearly so important in your new sector. A career changer moving from the hospitality industry into logistics, for example, will be much better served with phrases like “Managed scheduling and supplies for highly attended national conference” than “Consistently ranked in top 3 for occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR within compset throughout renovation phase.”

You also need to eliminate any jargon specific to your previous industry from your resume. Terms like “Class II drugs” are familiar to those in medical professions, but not to those in other areas. When you’re unsure whether a term is well known to people in other occupations, ask a friend or family member to look it over.





RESUME MISTAKES TO AVOID

When your resume has just seconds to impress a hiring manager or must move past an ATS, every little detail counts. Here are some of the most common resume mistakes to give you an idea of what not to do when searching for your next job.



Defining an objective at the top of your resume.

Everyone has the same objective – to get a job. Years ago, before employers had more than enough applicants to choose from, an objective or goals statement was a welcome beginning to a resume. Now that the demand has reversed, your objective statement does little for you beyond taking up precious space on the top of the first page and showing you’re still following old-school ideas. Don’t waste space on your resume telling employers what they already know – you’re looking for a job where you can use your skills.



Writing with first person pronouns.

Professional resume writing requires mastery of “resume speak” – a concise, hard-hitting approach that eliminates unnecessary “filler” words, including I, me, we, the, a, an, their, his, her, etc. You never want your resume to read more like an autobiography. Save the pronouns for your cover letter. Similarly, never write in third person. Using third person makes it seem as though someone else has said all these great things about you.



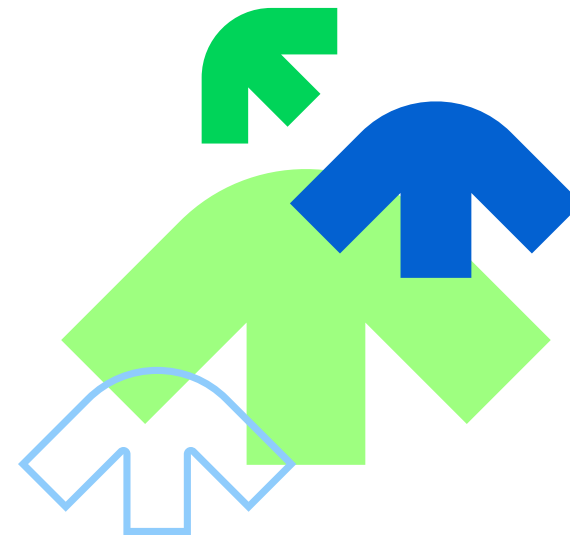
Noting “references available upon request.”

Another previous trend that has fallen into the unnecessary category is including “references available upon request” at the bottom of your resume. Similar to the objective, employers know that you are looking for a job with their company and will supply references when they ask for them. More importantly, never include your references or supervisors’ contact information on your resume. Create a separate document for this information and do not post it publicly. You don’t want your references’ contact information falling into the wrong hands.



Including too many bullet points.

Bullets can be our friend, but their services are often abused on a resume. Your resume should not be entirely or close-to-entirely bulleted, where every statement is part of a lengthy bulleted list. The reader has no idea where to start and may decide not to bother. Save bullets for the exciting details – results, achievements, and accomplishments.





Repeating, repeating, and repeating...

This faux pas is best illustrated with an example. Take a look at this description of a job seeker's previous position:

Sous Chef: Jefferson Hotel & Resort

- Maintain in house menu specifications
- Assist in banquet production
- Assist in the development of new menus
- Assist in maintaining proper production in line with food cost
- Manage weekly ordering for the restaurant
- Manage 8 restaurant line cooks

Seeing double (or triple)? This person used the same verbs over and over again – this bores the reader and shows a lack of vocabulary and creativity. For example, there are numerous synonyms that create more excitement than Manage – Facilitate. Supervise. Direct. Spearhead. Orchestrate. Variety is the spice of resume writing!



Using the header and footer.

You've crafted a beautiful resume, uploaded it to an online job board, and suddenly your contact information disappears. Why? Because you misused the First Page Header. Placing critical information, such as your name, in the header on page one is a big mistake. Most online job boards don't process or "read" headers or footers, so that means the ATS and the HR manager on the other end won't either. Make sure your contact information is in the body of your document, not in the header.



Selecting the wrong font.

Word processing software offers us extensive choices in terms of font styles, however there are only a handful that should be used on a resume. The following are tried-and-true fonts that are attractive, easy to read, and universally compatible:



Arial | Book Antiqua | Century Gothic | **Georgia** | Microsoft Sans Serif | Tahoma | Trebuchet |
Arial Narrow | Bookman Old Style | Garamond | **Lucida Bright** | Palatino Linotype | Times New Roman
MS Verdana

It's tempting, but do not use highly decorative and "expressive" fonts that are unprofessional, distracting, and challenging to read:



ALGERIAN | Chiller | Papyrus | Kristen ITC | *Brush Script MT* | *Lucida Calligraphy* |
French Script MT | **GOUDY STOUT**

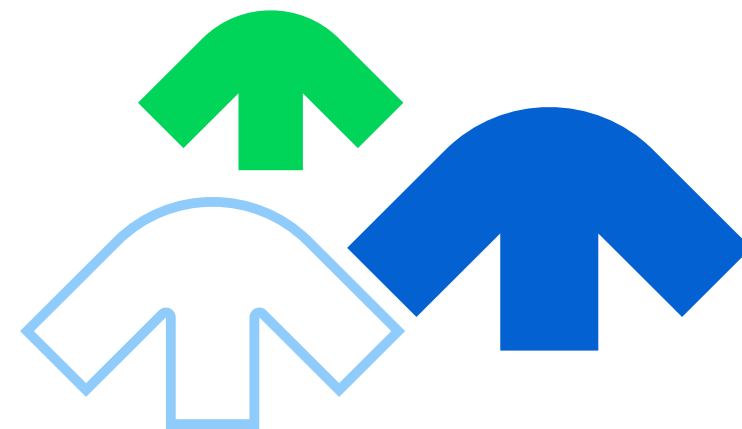


Detailing too much personal information.

We see quite the variety of interests and hobbies on the resumes we critique and rewrite: knitting, karate, ancestry, fixing old cars, staying in shape...

And even highly personal information: gender, age and/or birthday, spouse and children's names/ ages, religious and political views, dietary preferences...

And the list continues. Remember, 99% of the time your interests and extracurricular activities will NOT be relevant to your career objective, so don't use up valuable space on your resume telling employers how you like to spend your free time. Bring up these subjects during the interview if you identify a common interest with the interviewer.





BONUS SECTION: RESUME PROOFREADING

It is absolutely crucial for today's job seeker to have a flawless resume – one small mistake may be the deciding factor between you and other candidates with similar credentials. This is especially true if written communication is a part of your next job's responsibilities.

Proofreading is an essential step in the resume writing process. It requires your complete attention and high levels of patience and concentration. When you're ready to proofread your resume, take these steps below to ensure you're distributing an error-free document:



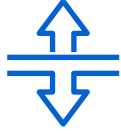
TAKE A MENTAL BREAK. You've spent hours on your resume and finally have it complete. Reward yourself with a break. Walk the dog, grab a cup of coffee, make a pizza – anything to get your mind off of your resume for a little while so you can approach it refreshed and ready to proofread. Trying to edit your resume while tired, stressed out, or anxious won't yield the best results. Take as much time as you need, be it a few hours or overnight, to recharge your batteries.



PRINT IT OUT. Spelling and grammar check are helpful tools, but can't be relied upon entirely to find errors in your resume. Print a hard copy of your document and turn away from your computer screen – even better, take your resume into a totally different room for a fresh perspective.



GO LINE BY LINE. You're already familiar with the content of your resume and know how things are supposed to read – this can lead you to overlook even the most obvious mistakes. Use a ruler or a blank piece of paper and go line by line through your resume. Taking on a few sentences or a paragraph all at once, though a faster way to proofread, isn't the best strategy.



READ OUT OF ORDER. Start from the end of your resume and read to the beginning. Cut your printed resume into sections, shuffle, and proofread separately. Being overly familiar with your document can hinder your editing skills – mix things up to see your resume in a new way.



FIND A FRIEND (OR TWO). Once you've proofread your own resume, give a clean, printed version to someone else to proofread. A fresh set of eyes is invaluable when it comes to proofreading and editing. By this point you've probably read your resume upwards of 10 times. Let an outsider go through your document to find mistakes or point out confusing areas that you may not recognize.



MARK EDITS IN RED. Though this color may bring back bad memories of failed tests in school, use red to mark any mistakes, edits, or adjustments as you proofread your resume. Blue or black inks do not stand out enough for when you return to your computer to make the corrections. Check out Merriam-Webster's guide to proofreaders' marks here, which comes in handy when working with others.



NOTE COMMON MISTAKES YOU MAKE. Find yourself using "their" when you should have used "there" or "they're?" Did you use "it's" on more than one occasion to show possession? Keep track of your recurring trouble areas and check your document thoroughly for these mistakes with Word's Find feature (ctrl+f).



PROOFREAD EVERYTHING. Don't just proofread and edit your resume – carefully review your cover letter, the email you send to the company with your resume, your references sheet, etc.





A QUICK GUIDE TO COMMON ERRORS

Don't forget to check your resume for these all-too-common spelling and formatting errors.

Facts & Figures

 **INCORRECT**

Saved over \$200K in production costs.

Elevated profits by \$4-\$5M and reduced errors by 2-3%.

 **CORRECT**

Saved more than \$200K in production costs. **OR** Saved \$200K+ in production costs.

Elevated profits by \$4M-\$5M and reduced errors by 2%-3%.



Degrees

✘ INCORRECT

Master's of Nursing

Bachelors of Business Administration

Associate's Degree

Bachelors' of Arts

✔ CORRECT

Master of Science in Nursing, Master's degree

Bachelor of Business Administration

Associate's degree

Bachelor of Arts



Hyphens

 **INCORRECT**

Highly-knowledgeable professional

High quality services

Poorly-performing territory

Completed on-schedule

 **CORRECT**

Highly knowledgeable professional

High-quality services

Poorly performing territory

Completed on schedule **OR** on-schedule completion



Dashes vs. Hyphens

SYMBOL

USE

Hyphen -

Combines two words: multimillion-dollar

En Dash –

Replaces the word “to”: \$35K–\$50K, 2007–2009

Em Dash —

Works similar to parenthesis, however it can be more dynamic: Recruited nearly 90 new hires—a department record—by conducting onsite job fairs.

Years of Experience

✘ INCORRECT

15 years experience

15 years’ of experience

✔ CORRECT

15 years’ experience

15 years of experience



CONCLUSION

Whether you're searching for a job after a layoff, changing careers, casually keeping your eye out for new opportunities, or simply wanting to give your resume a long-overdue update, the tried-and-true tips and proven strategies detailed in this playbook will get you started on the right foot. While resumes have come a long way since da Vinci wrote his letter to the Duke of Milan in the 14th century, their purpose has always remained the same: to help you land a great job.

For more resume guidance, let iHire's team of certified writers help. Our experts know what employers in your industry are looking for and have been trained in the most effective formatting and keyword optimization strategies for modern resume writing.

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iHire is a leading career-oriented platform that powers a family of 57 industry-focused talent networks, including WorkInSports, iHireVeterinary, iHireDental, iHireConstruction, and iHireChefs. For more than 20 years, iHire has combined advanced job matching technology with our expertise in the talent acquisition space to connect job seekers with employers in their desired sector. With an industry-specific, candidate-centric, and data-driven approach to recruitment, iHire helps candidates find meaningful work, and employers find unique, high-quality talent – faster, easier, and more effectively than a general job board. Visit www.iHire.com for more information.

