

CAREER & PLACEMENT NEWS

VOLUME 1

SPRING 1988

NUMBER 2

Resumes for "now"

by D'Arcy Cameron

Writing a resume remains one of the first tasks for a graduating student beginning with the job search process. Surprisingly, few students spend a significant amount of time preparing this document which is vital to an effective job search. Many students begin resume preparation with the notion that one basic format and style is all that is required. The reality is quite different.

Resume styles are like clothing fashions—they change over time. What works in one economic situation or corporate culture may not work in another. It is vital to be aware of this and to tailor your resume not only to your unique experiences, but to the current 'fashion' in style.

If you're using that straight chronological format you learned in high school while looking for your early summer jobs, or a copy of someone else's old resume, you're out of the running in terms of effective contemporary resume style. Don't sell yourself short. Put a little time into researching resume formats before writing one and you will reap benefits in terms of personal confidence and interview results. What follows is a short guide to help you.

What's the purpose of a resume?

There is only one: to convince a prospective employer that he/she should interview you. People tend to overlook this simple purpose and instead make assumptions about what should appear in their resume. Thus their resumes become cluttered with unhelpful information. Most resumes are written by people who fail to appreciate this fact, and their resumes join the 90% which never generate personal contacts. Your goal is to have your resume include in the few which receive serious consideration of an interview.

How do you accomplish this?

I believe the most effective way is to head your resume with a statement of CAREER OBJECTIVE. There is a great deal of controversy over the inclusion of this item. It is a fairly recent addition to resumes and many people are initially uncomfortable at the idea of such a clear statement. Almost always this is because most resume writers have **no idea** what their Career Objective is. The key point on the issue of Career Objective is that regardless of whether you actually state it on the resume or not, you can't get to an effective resume presentation without knowing what your Career Objective is first. Also, when you do get an interview, it is likely that the employer will ask you about your future (long range) career plans. If you've developed a statement, this awkward question will not be difficult.

Specifically, a good Career Objective is a 10-15 word statement of your career in terms that link your past, present and future employment path in a way that shows a cohesive, logical and planned approach. Your Career Objective should be usable with any employment application (generally speaking), but it does change from time to time. In today's workplace, job changes occur every four years on average, and no one expects you to have a Career Objective that is not responsive to workplace and personal change. Employers are, however, interested in candidates who are analytical about themselves, and who project a reasonable level of goal orientation. A well-stated Career Objective on your resume is the best way to show prospective employers (and yourself) that you possess this quality.

What about the rest of the resume?

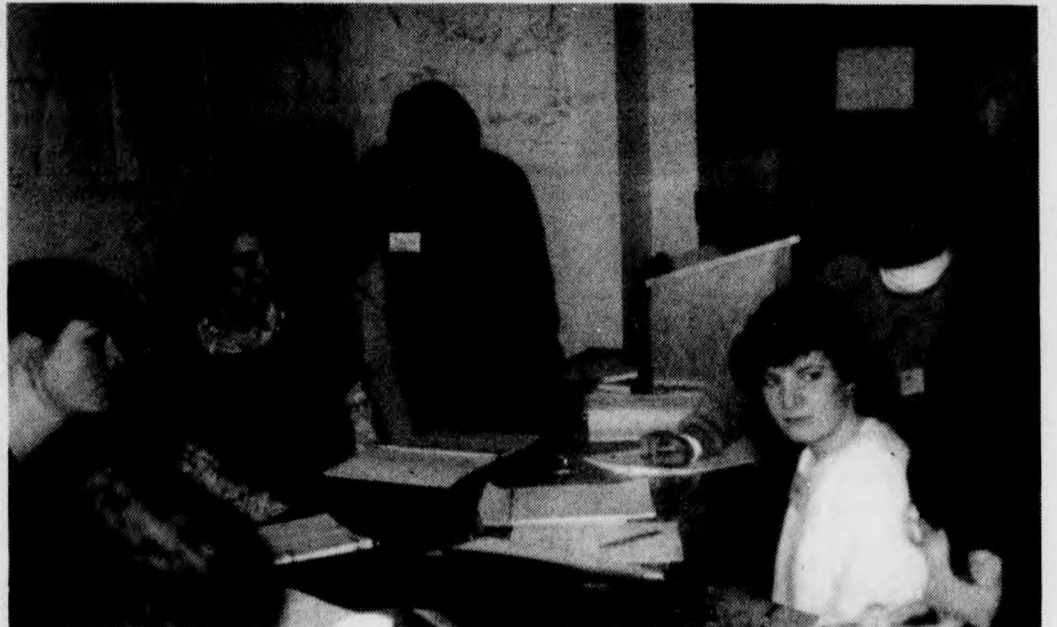
Believe it or not, if you have developed a strong Career Objective that you feel comfortable with (of course you've shared it with others for constructive criticism), the rest is easy. For most of us, there are two basic formats to consider, CHRONOLOGICAL and FUNCTIONAL. You should decide which is best for you based on the way your experience supports your Career Objective. Many people develop a combined-style format which is effective if they don't get too creative. The worst decision is to follow a sample format blindly, it probably won't do for you what it did for the original owner, and recruiters have an uncanny knack for spotting "copy" resumes.

The chronological style is most popular with employers, because 70% of candidates use it and it is easy to comprehend. Employment and education experience is shown in reverse chronological order, present or most recent entry first. Though it is based on **time**, the chronological style is probably more effective if dates (years only) are shown to the right of the entry rather than the left. I suggest that titles or degree name should appear at the left side since these are of more importance to the employer. Each entry should include between one and four tightly worded points that emphasize what you **did** (avoid a job-description approach). Inclusion of results and some quantitative detail where appropriate will give your points both justification and sincerity. Remember, the Career Objective determines what and how information is included. If a point doesn't bear some relation to the content of your Career Objective, it has no place in the resume.

The FUNCTIONAL style resume is selected by two types of candidates: the recent graduate who has little or no solid work experience, and the candidate who has been in and out of the workplace over time for educational, professional or personal reasons. This format imitates the active, clear descriptive style now favoured for chronological resumes, but the order is based on **skills** rather than time. Experience is grouped into areas of skill expertise, and may include recent and past work experience, educational and personal achievements within one skill area.

A greater degree of self-assessment is required to make this format effective. The writer needs to be very aware of his/her specific skills, where and how they have been proven and how they may be effectively described. A list of approximately 15-20 examples of skills and how they were used form the basis of the material to be used. These examples are then divided into 4 or 5 skill areas whose headings depend on the individual's expertise. Sample headings include COMMUNICATION, ADMINISTRATIVE, RESEARCH, MARKETING, SUPERVISORY. The skill examples are further synthesized into 3 or 4 points for each heading. The resume is assembled with a view to strong support of the Career Objective. Since the points do not contain details of date and place of experience, a section on EMPLOYMENT HISTORY will be needed. This section, and that for EDUCATION will contain only details of title/degree, place and date, in reverse chronological order.

Think of the job of creating an effective resume as a learning experience, and you will find the process alone will improve your job search skills. In today's workplace, I believe no one should be without a resume less than one year out of date. You never know when you'll have the opportunity to use it!



Getting Started: Adjusting to your first permanent job

by Neil Gibson

Students about to enter the full-time employment world are often so preoccupied with landing that first permanent job that they give little thought to what it will be like once they begin their new jobs. In general, students tend to underestimate the significance of the role change from 'student' to 'employee.'

The New Role of Employee

Sociologists define the concept of 'role' in terms of the behaviour expected of someone with a given status. Given the new status of 'employee,' how will the behaviour expected of you differ from that expected of you as 'student?' Some changes will be obvious, others more subtle. The former would include: dressing in a manner appropriate to your work environment, arriving for and leaving work at a certain time each day, spending your whole day at work rather than operating according to your class schedule, and being paid for your efforts.

The subtle changes in expected behaviour are in many ways more important, yet all too often unanticipated. Phillip W. Dunphy in **Career Development for the College Student** points out that "the whole future of employment with an organization rides on the first few weeks or months." He goes on to remind the new employee that, above all else, "the employee is expected to be productive. In return for wages, you agree to expend your resources for the employer's benefit. Learning and personal development should not be forgotten, but they must accept a secondary place." No longer can you simply ask yourself the question, "How will this benefit me?" the question now should be, "How will my efforts benefit my employer?" Failure to grasp this change can have disastrous consequences for your career development.

The Corporate Culture

Another subtle point to consider in your adjustment during the early stages of your first job is to understand the 'corporate culture' of your workplace. Dunphy notes that "the vast majority of people who fail in jobs do so because they fail to relate well with others. Inability to do the work . . . is a relatively rare cause of early dismissal." What behaviours on your part will be more effective than others? First and foremost, learn to keep your ears open and concentrate on listening actively and perceptively. In any organization, your success in the early stages of your job will be dependent on many other people, some of whom you will find easier to work with than others. You have no choice over those with whom you must associate, so you must learn to be flexible enough to adapt to the various personalities involved. People at all levels of the organization can have an impact on how smoothly you adapt to your new role.

Managing The Changes

What else can you do to manage the subtle changes in your new role as employee? The following checklist will be a useful source of reminders for you, both in preparing for your new role as employee, and also in managing the early stages of your new job.

1. Pay close attention to details and procedures, while some of these may seem confusing, and in some cases unnecessary, remember that they are important to those with whom you must associate.
2. Get to know the names and responsibilities of everyone with whom you will come in contact in the carrying out of your duties.
3. Recognize that it is okay to say, "I don't know," "I need help," or "I made a mistake." Avoid face-saving comments. You will ultimately be respected for your honesty and willingness to admit that you don't know everything.
4. Readjust your sights on promotion. In many organizations

it may take significantly longer than you thought to actually qualify for a promotion.

5. Show some commitment to working beyond the normal working hours if necessary.
6. Identify a mentor, someone of higher status within the organization who can serve as an advisor and/or sounding board for you.
7. Advancing within an organization does not have to be at someone else's expense. You cannot afford to have enemies during the early stages of your new job. Recognize the feelings of others who may be affected by your actions and react accordingly.
8. Inform yourself. Read journals related to your field; stay up to date with developments which may have an impact on your knowledge base or decisions you may have to make.
9. Start keeping your own record of achievements, goals reached, and any other information which may have come in handy for your first and subsequent performance evaluations. Too often the new employee incorrectly assumes that the evaluation process is totally the responsibility of the supervisor, or that ones accomplishments will speak for themselves.
10. At some point, consider ways of furthering your education and qualifications through internal and external coursework. Be careful not to undertake any training until you and your supervisor are satisfied that it will not interfere with your ability to carry out your duties.
11. Don't avoid dealing with problems. Determine who might best advise you—in some cases it may be better to consult someone outside the organization. Always try to have solutions in mind when presenting problem situations to your supervisor.
12. In her article "25 Things Your Boss Wants You To Know" (Working Woman, May, 1985), Shirley Sloan Fader cautions "Never assume other people are operating from your premises, your standards, your goals or your rules." If you find yourself making comments like, "I never would have expected such behaviour . . ." you will be demonstrating your lack of maturity and awareness of how your perspective differs from those of others.
13. Develop an open-minded attitude towards change. To progress within an organization, you need to be regarded as someone who is willing to broaden his/her horizons rather than someone who is strictly concerned with maintaining the status quo.
14. Try to work towards developing alternatives to what you are currently doing, either within the organization or outside of it, by joining professional associations and making external contacts. Assuming that your future is secure within an organization is the first step towards vulnerability.

(Adapted and reprinted with permission from Career Services, Wilfrid Laurier University.)

RENOVATIONS NEARING COMPLETION

During the past two months, extensive renovations have been underway at the Career and Placement Centre. Employer interview facilities have been increased. Several career counselling offices have been added as well as a computer lab to house the CHOICES employment research program. A conference room will now be available at the Centre for intake information sessions, company briefings, job search/job creation training, career planning seminars and computerized testing interpretations. An enlarged Resource Library is scheduled to be reopened by May 1 and an automated placement system will be installed in June.

Although improvements will continue throughout the summer months, regular hours: Monday to Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. are in effect once again. Evening hours will resume in September.

While service interruptions have been kept to a minimum, we very much appreciate the patience and cooperation of employers, students, alumni, the Office of Student Affairs and entire York community during this period.

When the dust settles at N108 Ross, the University will have a career and placement facility that will accommodate the kind of client growth and service expansion that we anticipate in the 1990's.

Our official opening is scheduled for early September. Meanwhile, drop in and see us. We can assist you in developing and achieving your vocational plans.

John T. Harries
Director



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