

How to Create A Compelling Resume & Cover Letter

By Daniel K. Berman, PhD



Résumé vs. CV: What's the Difference?



- Curriculum vitae: [the] course of [my entire] life.
- CVs can be multiple pages (no limit).
- A CV is generally used in an ACADEMIC context.
- A resume is generally limited to 1-2 pages.
- Résumé may be written without the accent marks.



How to Create a Resume, Quickly & Cheaply, From Scratch: Three “Hacks”

1. Use of Online Resume Building Sites
2. “Reverse Engineering”
3. Combination of These Two



Hack #1: Use of Online Resume Building Sites

EXAMPLES:

- LiveCareer.com
- ResumeGenius.com
- ResumeHelp.com

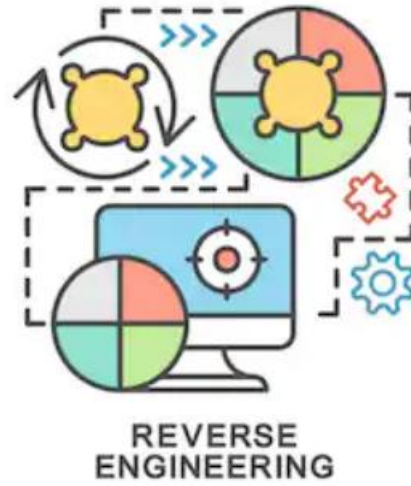
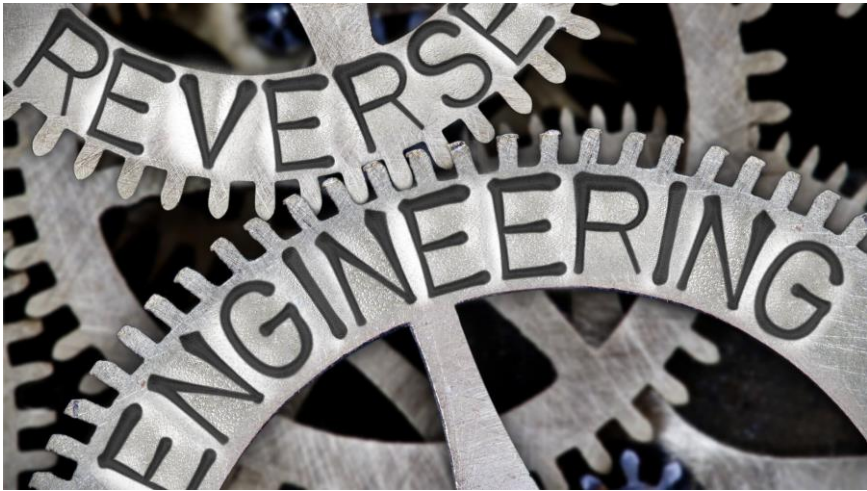
HOW IT WORKS:

- Select a format/style.
- Choose a professional category.
- Respond to a series of prompts.
- To pay \$0, copy and paste, section by section, into a Word file on your system.
- For more convenience/options, pay a \$2-3 minimum or sign up for a trial period.
- If a membership is involved, be sure to cancel before the monthly fee is charged.



Hack #2: "Reverse Engineering"

1. Search for resumes of persons in situations roughly similar to yours (in terms of both background and objective).
2. Identify at least several that impress you as strong in at least certain ways.
3. Take the best parts of each and combine them into your own unique resume.



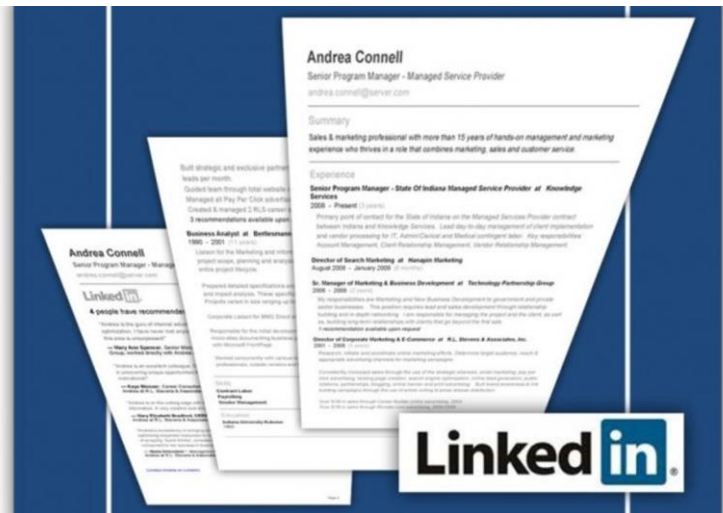
Hack #3: Combination of #1 & #2

- ❑ Option A: Combine Hacks #1 & #2.
- ❑ Option B: Get professional help after using #1 or #2 or both, to improve your creation.



Bonus Hack: LinkedIn Resume Builder

1. Click the “Me” icon at the top of your LinkedIn homepage.
2. Click on “View profile.”
3. Click the “More ...” button in the upper area of your profile.
4. Select “Build a resume” from the available dropdown menu.
5. Respond to the questions for which you are prompted.





BORING

Think of Your Resume as Telling a Story



Life Is Like a Resume: Five Rules to Write By

1. You get out of it what you put into it.
2. Honesty is the best policy.
3. Putting yourself in the other person's shoes yields huge rewards.
4. It pays to be focused.
5. Longer is not necessarily better.



Putting Yourself in the Other Person's Shoes
Yields Huge Rewards.



It Pays to Be Focused.



Longer Is Not Necessarily Better.



The Single Most Overlooked “Secret” To a Great Application Package: A Personal Mission Statement



Mission Statement: Characteristics



- An expression of purpose that implies a set of values.
- Concise, crystal clear and compelling.
- May benefit from adjustment over time.
- May vary for different dimensions of life (e.g., work vs. family).
- Gives you clarity and focus, which translates into power.
- Enhances energy and motivation, making you more productive.
- A halfway decent one is infinitely better than none at all.
- Benefits begin to accrue immediately.

Mission Statement: Examples

- “To improve people’s lives through software.” — Jamie Zawinski, open-source hacker
- “To help people find hope after loss.” — Gloria Horsley, founder of Open to Hope
- “To help people communicate their messages effectively, so they can achieve their goals.”



How to Develop Your Own Mission Statement

1. Search online for “best personal mission statement for [fill in your category, such as healthcare, small business or whatever].”
2. Keep an eye on the auto-populated phrases that appear in the box as you are typing, for any that appear particularly relevant to you.
3. Adapt/modify/combine whichever ones seem to resonate with you.

OR: Work with a professional who can help you, possibly after coming up with a working version, using the methodology above (sometimes it only literally takes one minute!).

[ARTICLE ONLINE](#)



Formatting, Style & Strategy



Formatting

- Keep it simple (exception: graphic designers or other special cases).
- Black and white only, easy-to read fonts (e.g., Helvetica and Times New Roman).
- Strive for aesthetic, “clean” look, understated and dignified.
- Use white space for visual relief — Avoid tables, “widows” & “orphans.”
- Best bet as a general rule is to use reverse chronological order.
- Make the document either one page or two full pages (not 1.5).





Word vs. PDF



- Submit as PDF, unless specifically requested to submit as Word document.
- Always remember to read the instructions, especially at a recruiter or large company website.
- Only older ATSs have trouble with PDFs, especially if there are no tables or special formatting.
- PDF format “locks” your content in place and looks more professional.
- Some recruiters may prefer Word format, so they can remove your contact information.
- Format to follow when naming file: JaneDoeResume.pdf or JaneDoeResume.docx.
- Consider embedding your fonts in the PDF and developing text-only version of the document.
- Printing file as PDF may not be as good as embedding the fonts (according to some).
- Send to friends and family for “testing” on their systems, to make sure.
- Check document “properties” to make sure those settings are correct.

Mayank Singh

SKILLS

Product Management
Agile Development
UI / UX Design
Prototyping
Online Marketing
Team Management

EDUCATION

Indian Institute of
Management, Kozhikode
Business Management
2007 - 2009

National Institute of
Technology, Allahabad
B.Tech, Computer Sciences
2000 - 2004

CONTACT

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mayank.sgh@gmail.com
1032 106 Ave NE
Bellevue 98004 WA

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Xoxoday.com, VP - Product 2017 - now

Xoxoday is a bootstrapped employee engagement SaaS company based out of Bangalore. It has 500+ customers across 10 countries.

- Improved customer satisfaction by launching a major product upgrade built from scratch
- Responsible for driving product strategy and roadmap
- Enabled high throughput and productivity for product team by hiring and training team members and defining work processes

Acevestor.com, Founder 2015 - 16

Acevestor.com is a low cost robo advisory platform for Indian investors.

- Built the front & back end for MVP as the sole PM & developer
- Currently managing assets worth INR 60 mn for ~20 investors
- Technical skills used: Ruby on Rails, HTML, CSS, JS, PostgreSQL, Redis, AWS

FusionCharts.com, Head - Growth Marketing 2014 - 15

- Increased number of marketing qualified leads by 25% YoY
- Reduced lead conversion cycle by 20% by improving documentation and providing self serve capability to prospects
- Led the documentation and marketing teams of 10 members

Flipkart.com, Manager 2012 - 14

Flipkart.com is India's largest ecommerce company that was acquired by Walmart in 2018 for USD 19 bn.

- Reduced CPA of AdWords campaigns by ~40% by building an automated bid optimization algorithm
- Increased email channel revenues by 4X by building targeted marketing campaigns
- Helped CMO plan marketing budget allocation through customer, channel and category analytics

Mu Sigma Business Solutions, Associate Manager 2010 - 12

Mu Sigma is an analytics and data sciences service provider funded by Sequoia Capital and General Atlantic Partners.

- Managed analytical engagements with Fortune 500 clients like Dell, SAP & United Airlines



Creative Resumes

“Widows” & “Orphans”

X

>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur tortor elit. Integer rutrum imperdiet leo tincidunt sollicitudin. Curabitur iaculis mattis tincidunt. Vivamus mauris metus, elementum a turpis eget, **fringilla.**

orphan

Cras malesuada metus turpis, vel vestibulum odio

widow

convallis praesent justo.

Nec sagittis urna. Leo nibh, venenatis non suscipit venenatis, tempus vel risus. Nam vel odio sed turpis tincidunt bibendum. Morbi eu fermentum tortor.

Nullam eu vulputate sapien. Integer risus ex, ultrice diam et, rutrum...

✓

>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur tortor elit. Integer rutrum imperdiet leo tincidunt sollicitudin. Curabitur iaculis mattis tincidunt. Vivamus mauris metus, elementum a turpis **eget, fringilla.**

orphan is removed by bringing the preceding word down a line

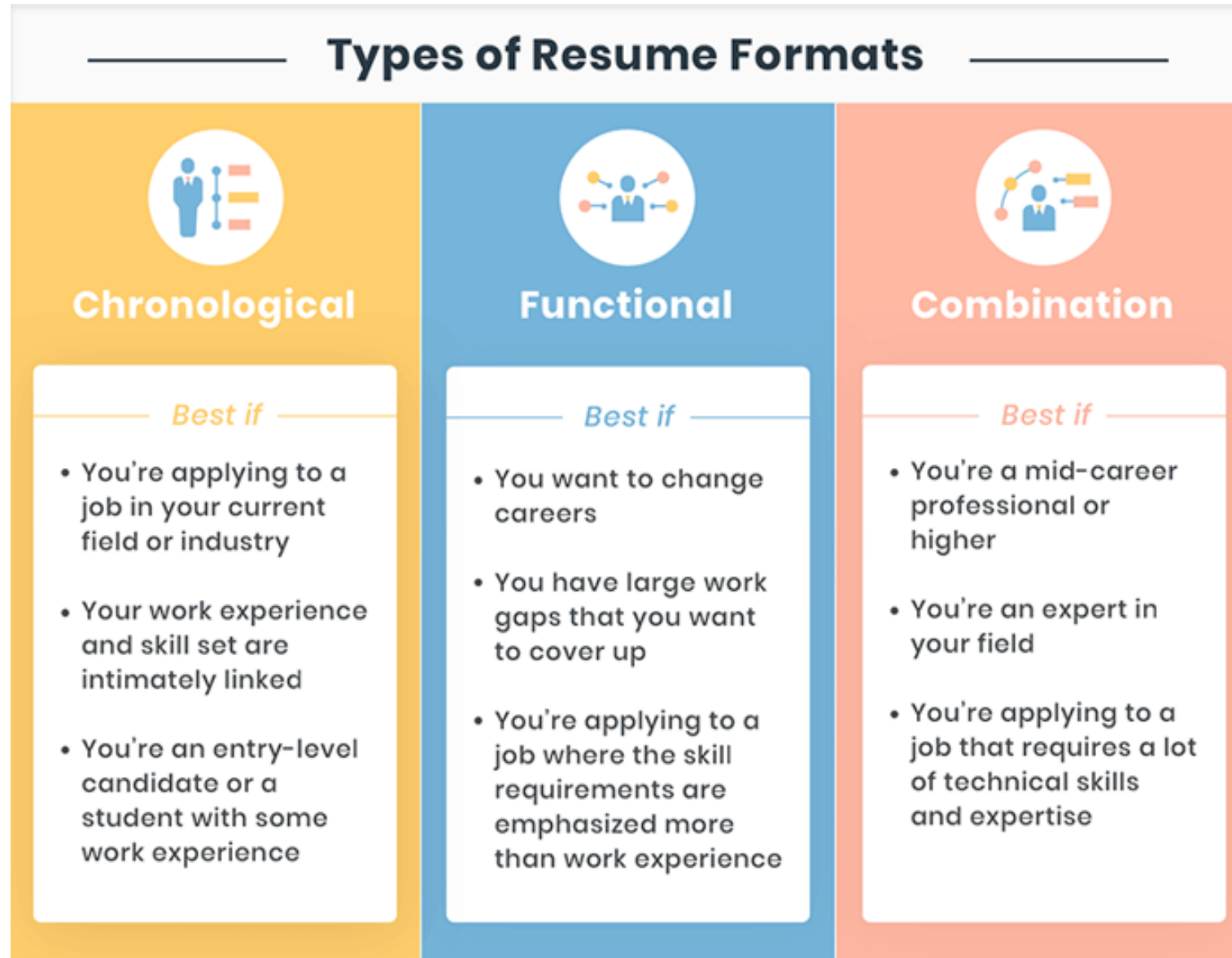
Cras condimentum nibh malesuada metus turpis, vel vestibulum odio **convallis praesent justo.**

widow is gotten rid of by adjusting column length

Nec sagittis urna. Leo nibh, venenatis non suscipit venenatis, tempus vel risus. Nam vel odio sed turpis tincidunt bibendum. Morbi eu fermentum tortor.

Nullam eu vulputate sapien. Integer risus ex, ultrice diam et, rutrum. Vivamus a est suscipit, malesuada ex gravida, sapien nec tristique...

Three Traditional Resume “Styles”



Source: ResumeGenius.com

Strategy



- **Create or revise resume in coordination with job post/description.**
- “Deconstruct” the verbiage, factoring key points into resume and cover letter.
- Carefully distinguish between “minimum” and “preferred” qualifications.
- Identify the categories of opportunities to which you will be applying.
- **Create different versions of your resume, one for each category.**
- **Customize your cover letter for each different situation.**
- Make sure your LinkedIn profile is coordinated with your resume.
- “Clean up” your online presence, as appropriate.



Twin Virtues:
Be Specific, Be Concise

Specificity Lends Credibility

WORK EXPERIENCE

Super Mario Brothers player

2016-present

- Asked to play by friends
- Played several levels
- Navigated obstacles, barrels, monkeys



WORK EXPERIENCE

Super Mario Brothers expert

2016-present

- Recruited to join elite team that placed 1st in tournaments three years in a row
- Exceeded 1 million points in finals each year, earning MVP trophy in 2019
- Specialized in turning sharp corners with high hand dexterity leading to a 17% advantage over competitive teams

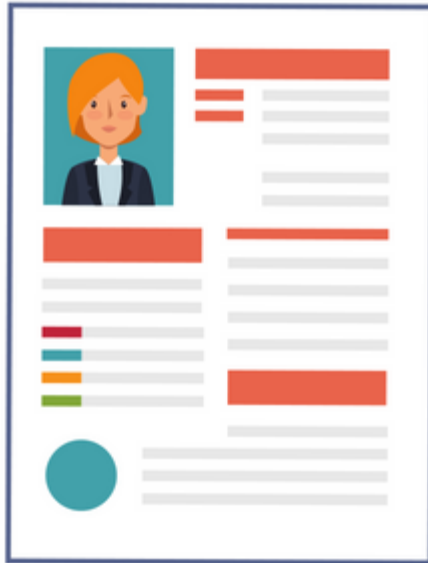
The Greater Implications of Being Concise

*If I had more time,
I would have written a
shorter letter.*

- BLAISE PASCAL

- You demonstrate that you have the ability to be brief.
- You show you care enough about the task to invest your time to be concise.
- You are showing consideration for the reader's time.

Anatomy of the “Perfect” Resume



- The Header
- Job Title
- Professional Summary
- Core Competencies/Qualifications
- Professional/Related Experience
- Education & Related
- Additional Skills, Interests & Community Service
- Optional Sections

The Header: Name & Contact Info

8 COMMON MISTAKES:

- Handicapping yourself with a challenging name and no “help” included.
- Making your name either too prominent or not prominent enough.
- Failing to give sufficiently careful thought about the degrees placed after your name.
- Wasting space with a complete physical address.
- Using a less-than-entirely-professional email ID.
- Failing to include a LinkedIn URL.
- Failing to make the LinkedIn URL customized.
- Arranging the header information in a way that wastes space.



Model Header

Xixi (Sissy) Wang, MBA **Insights & Analytics Manager**

408-123-4567 · sissy.wang@gmail.com · [linkedin.com/in/sissywang](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sissywang) · San Jose, CA 95123



Job Title

Xixi (Sissy) Wang, MBA **Insights & Analytics Manager**

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Professional Summary

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY/OBJECTIVE

Seasoned data analyst—with demonstrated capacity for innovative/creative and applied statistical analysis—seeking a challenging position in insights and analytics, leveraging the skills and experience acquired during some 20 years of service at Charles Schwab & Co., to make a significant contribution to the hiring organization.

Core Competencies/Qualifications

CORE COMPETENCIES/QUALIFICATIONS

- **Leadership:** team building, coaching & mentoring, training & education, motivation/inspiration
- **Business/Management:** deep insight into discovering/uncovering company problems and opportunities
- **Technology:** Proficient with SPSS, SAS/SQL, R, Teradata, Tableau, Oracle databases, MS Office
- **Personal Attributes:** collaborative, flexible, proactive, well-organized, detail-oriented, team player
- **Interpersonal:** communication (oral & written), relationship building, cultural awareness, troubleshooting

Professional/Related Experience (Core)

PROFESSIONAL/RELATED EXPERIENCE

Director of Advanced Analytics at Charles Schwab & Co., San Francisco, CA, 01/2011-01/2016

- Created advanced analytic models to tie client loyalty to business results.
- Implemented an innovative Net Promoter Score system to measure client loyalty across all business lines.
- Improved and expanded advanced statistical sampling and weighting of methodologies.
- Advised internal business partners on setting priorities, boosted engagement, created client-centric culture.
- Integrating deep customer insights with advanced data analysis, identified numerous improvement opportunities.

Senior Client Loyalty Analyst at Charles Schwab & Co., San Francisco, CA, 01/2003-12/2010

- Built effective business case for successful corporate turnaround based on client loyalty.
- Uncovered opportunities with regard to client complaints and developed surveys for institutional clients.
- Employed advanced statistical sampling and weighting methodologies.
- Provided reliable metrics and valuable insights to executive leadership across the firm.
- Helped engineer a complete business turnaround based on improving client loyalty.

Professional Experience: Tips & Techniques

- Use reverse chronological order.
- Make bullet points single lines whenever possible (don't exceed two).
- Minimum font size for Times New Roman is 11-point (may differ by font).
- Include your most specific and compelling data points and achievements.
- Use numbers and percentages to quantify whenever possible.
- Show how you have ADDED VALUE and SOLVED PROBLEMS.
- But don't beat yourself up if you don't have one to put in every line.
- Always use PARALLEL STRUCTURE and be CONSISTENT in language and style.
- Avoid personal pronouns (I & me)—omit articles (a & the) when feasible.

The XYZ Formula

A former Google executive (Laszlo Bock) has come up with what we might call the XYZ Formula: “Accomplished [X] as measured by [Y] by doing [Z].”

- Here's an illustration for a sales support associate.
- **WEAK:** Achieved annual business plan commitments for volumes, model mix, wholesale revenue, selling expenses and brand.
- **STRONG:** As a team member, contributed to 21% increase in advertiser spend by achieving 158% of target number of customer contacts (80 contacts per week) and 192% of target interaction depth (20 minutes per customer).

XYZ Formula: Example 2

- **WEAK:** Studied financial performance of companies and made investment recommendations.
- **STRONG:** Improved portfolio performance by 12% (\$1.2M) over one year by refining cost of capital calculations for information-poor markets and re-weighting portfolio based on resulting valuations.
- **NOTE:** The addition of the “12% improvement” makes the statement more powerful. Adding “(\$1.2M)” anticipates the reviewer’s question about whether 12% is significant. If you improved investment results by 12%, but that meant going from \$100 to \$112, that’s not too impressive. But adding \$1.2M to the starting portfolio value of \$10 million is substantial. Explaining how you did it adds credibility and gives insight into your strengths.

XYZ Formula: Example 3

Marketing manager bullet point example:

- **SO-SO**: Studied the branding and marketing strategies of XYZ. Analyzed the pricing strategies of XYZ in comparison to competitors.
- **BETTER**: Led cross-functional 10-member team to develop and implement global advertising strategy for \$X million XYZ brand.
- **BEST**: Led cross-functional 10-member team to develop and implement global advertising strategy for \$X million ABC brand, *resulting in 25-point increase in brand recall, 12% improvement in net promoter score, and contributing to 18% year-over-year sales improvement (\$XM).*

Education & Related

EDUCATION

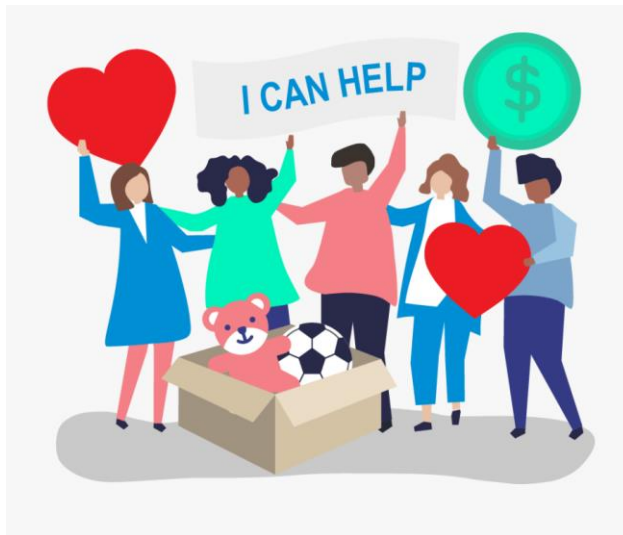
- MBA, International Business Management, Golden Gate University, San Francisco, CA (May 2014)
- BS, Business Administration (International Business), San Francisco State University (December 1996)
- Non-degree alumna, East Asian Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (1985-1989)



Additional Skills, Interests & Community Service

ADDITIONAL SKILLS, INTERESTS & COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Familiar with Chinese and Japanese language and culture (5-6 years' residence in Japan and Taiwan)
- Volunteered at Shaolin Culture Center and Samaritan House in San Mateo, Save the Bay (SF)
- Camping, hiking, travel (Canada, Galapagos Islands, Israel, Japan, Taiwan, Tanzania, Tibet, Tunisia)



Optional Sections

- Honors & Awards
- Patents
- Special Achievements
- Professional Associations/Memberships
- Certificates, Licenses, Trainings (or combine with Education)
- Publications or Papers
- Related Coursework
- References



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- Provided reliable metrics and valuable insights to executive leadership across the firm.
- Helped engineer a complete business turnaround based on improving client loyalty.

Project Manager at Charles Schwab & Co., San Francisco, CA, 08/1997-12/2002

- Promoted from temporary to full-time employee within the space of only four months.
- Responsible for organizing and transmitting complaint reporting data.
- Developed customer satisfaction surveys for retail clients, as a reliable metric for business dashboards.

Business Consultant at Emerald Clubs, Taipei, Taiwan, 03/1993-08/1997

- Established two karaoke clubs for Japanese businessmen in Taipei, from concept to execution.
- Advised owners in creating business plan, raising capital, training staff, accounting, marketing and all operations.
- Utilized language skills, Chinese (Mandarin) and Japanese, as well as knowledge of both cultures.

EDUCATION

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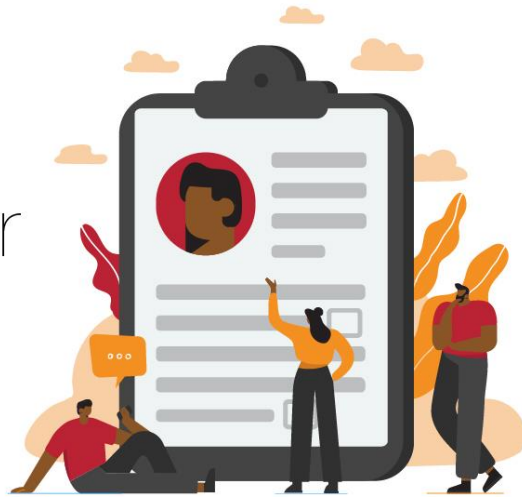
Example Resume

The Art of the Cover Letter



Anatomy of a “Perfect” Cover Letter

ESSENTIAL PARTS OF A
Cover Letter



In One (1) Page:

- Introduction
- Summation => Fit
- Bullets (“Ammunition”)
- Reason(s)
- Conclusion

Cover Letter MISTAKES to Avoid



- Not CUSTOMIZING your letter for the individual situation.
- Failing to show a GOOD GRASP of the essence of the position.
- PRESUMING with CERTAINTY that you are the best candidate.
- PUSHING for an immediate response.
- EXCEEDING one page.

More Best Practices for Resumes & Cover Letters



- Focus
- Quantify
- Declutter
- Simplify
- Proofread

Use the “PAR” Method, to Quantify

- ✓ **Problem:** Identify a responsibility or issue at work.
 - ✓ **Action:** Discuss how you addressed the problem.
 - ✓ **Results:** State the outcome of that action.
-
- Example: “Developed new filing and organizational practices, saving the company \$300,000 per year in contracted labor expenses.”
 - Even better: “Developed 12 new filing and organizational practices, saving the company \$300,000 per year in contracted labor expenses, a cost decrease of 25%.”

Proofread



- Address one element or section at a time.
- Start with words flagged by “spell check.”
- Proofread not just for misspelled words but also punctuation.
- Check for consistency in use of punctuation, as well as formatting practices.
- Pay particular attention to homonyms and incorrect words correctly spelled.
- Proof in waves and stages, rather than in a way that is completely linear.
- Take non-professional feedback with a grain of salt.
- Set aside the document for a time, to come back to it later, with fresh eyes.



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questions