



# TEN SECONDS TO IMPRESS

Crafting Resumes that Create Opportunities

June 2021

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**‘A RESUME IS A MARKETING DOCUMENT; THE AIM OF PREPARING ONE IS TO IMPRESS, GAIN INTERVIEWS AND RECEIVE JOB OFFERS’**



- This training material was prepared by Dr J. E. Cloutman (PhD) as part of a project funded by the NSW Government.

## GROUNDWORK

### 1. TEN SECONDS TO IMPRESS

You may like your own resume. You may have spent many hours fine-tuning it and getting it just the way you want it. However, the point is, is the person who's going to be reading it going to like it? If they're not, or if it's likely that they'll find fault with it, then it doesn't matter how much you like what you've produced, it's not going to make an impression. We'll come back to this theme in a bit. First, *why only ten seconds to impress?* Well, this is where the reality of the job hiring process has leapt forward and the people who are seeking work – that means you – have not been told how the process works. Here's the reality of the job hiring process in 2021:

#### **Computerisation has exploded:**

Your resume may never be seen by human eyes until well into the hiring process. And you may have to put in a lot of effort to even get to the first interview. Larger companies, in particular, are automating the hiring process to cut time and save costs. The first review of your resume may well be done by a computer. Software, which is programmed to look for certain key words or phrases in your resume and match it to job ads, will be used to weed out irrelevant applications.

Then, you may well, particularly during COVID, be asked to make a short, 3-minute video, answering certain key questions and/or to do online tests. These will be reviewed by the hiring team before you ever get to a face-to-face interview. In other words, a CV by itself is no longer the sole consideration for employers.

#### **Staff in the HR department you are applying to are, typically, overloaded**

Gone are the days when you could send in a resume and be assured of a response from a real person. You are most likely going to receive an automated email acknowledging receipt of your resume.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the fence, a typical HR department receives *dozens, even hundreds, and sometimes thousands* of applications for just one job. Even if the thousands are whittled down to dozens, do you really think someone sits there and reads every resume from front to back, along with the cover letters AND check you out on social media?

Remember: **their first job will be to whittle down the pile of dozens or hundreds to a manageable amount** (say, no more than two dozen CV's). So, the first thing they will do is to REJECT applications, not review them all.

#### **CLASS ACTIVITY: VIDEO**

Watch this video as a class.

How recruiters read your resume ... in 7 Seconds <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFngomrq58o>

- What are the types of words that your bullet point sentences should begin with? Why?
- Note down 3 or 4 of the words that the video presenter gives as examples.

#### **PAIR WORK:**

Break into pairs and answer:

- Computers may sift and sort your resume, along with hundreds of others. The main thing they are searching for are .....
- Computers could be used to whittle hundreds of applications down to dozens. Those dozens will then be reviewed by HR staff, who, typically, take ..... to look at your resume
- Companies may also use ..... and/ or online ..... to evaluate you and they may also check out your ..... page(s)

## 2. THE KETCHUP STAIN

If you were interviewing someone and they turned up with ketchup stains on their shirt or blouse, what would you think? The chances are, even if they were one of the most interesting people you end up interviewing – the ketchup stains are going to be so front and centre in your mind, you might not be able to get past them. A resume is no different. If you have any of the following on your CV, you're probably just putting yourself to the bottom of the hiring manager's pile by having them there:

- Spelling and grammar mistakes; weird fonts, colours or designs
- Too many columns or graphics; particularly if the company is using applicant sorting software, as resumes with too many of either of these won't get through the sorting process
- A photo: people generally make their minds up about others quite quickly, and they'll make their mind up about you more on the photo than on your accomplishments.
- Gaps in time (i.e., you don't appear to have done anything for 5 years at one point).
- Long, boring 'laundry lists' of responsibilities
- Details of your social media weblinks when you haven't checked out what is actually on your social media page. (Tip): Google yourself, as an exercise, and see what comes up.
- Incorrectly typed or inappropriate email addresses: ([powertoolmaniac@gmail.com](mailto:powertoolmaniac@gmail.com); [lovingspoonful@yahoo.com](mailto:lovingspoonful@yahoo.com))
- Lack of qualifications or experience specifically stated as required in the job ad.
- An address hundreds of kilometres from the job being applied for with no explanation in the resume or covering letter why you are moving location



## MY NOTES (1)

### PAIR WORK / CLASS DISCUSSION

In pairs, discuss how you would address / avoid each of the above points, so that they are not an issue in your CV

- Spelling / grammar; weird fonts, colours or designs .....
- Gaps in time .....
- Long, boring 'laundry lists' of responsibilities .....
- Inappropriate social media weblinks .....
- Missing qualifications / experience .....
- A distant address .....

Bearing in mind what's just been discussed, what else would put you off someone's resume? Is there anything you can think of that's not on the list above? How would you modify your CV to avoid it?

### PAIR WORK / CLASS DISCUSSION

- Let's have a look at your current resume. Swap it with the classmate you are pairing with and critique each other's resumes. How would your / your partner's resumes stand up to the ten second evaluation? Take notes on the feedback. Swap one more time and do the same thing with someone else in the class. Take notes on the feedback
- Summarise what's wrong with your resume; tell the others in the class about what you've found and how you think it might be improved.
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## FIRST IN BEST DRESSED

### 3. KEY WORDS IN A DIGITAL AGE

You might think that having removed the more negative or troublesome things from your resume, it's time to write it better. Well, it is ... but not quite.

The first thing we have to do is to recognise once again, that, in a digital age where your resume is evaluated as often as not by a computer and a software program, that certain key things are going to be of great importance. You should be asking yourself, here, how, actually does a computer sort resumes for their relevance? The answer is, it does it by identifying **key words** in the resumes and then giving the applicant a score, based on these key words. That might sound daunting, but what you are often not told is that those key words are frequently used in the job advert that you're responding to.

Let's have a look at a specific advert. Here's one for an Administrative Officer (below):

#### PAIR WORK

- Working in pairs see if you can identify at least six key words in the advert below that would be used to assess – whether by a computer or by a person – someone's relevance to the role. We've highlighted two for you already. When you're done, report your findings to the trainer, who will write the words on the whiteboard.



The Administration Officer provides administrative and support services to facilitate the **efficient operation** of the team.

#### **Key accountabilities**

- Provide administrative support to assist in processing of **legal matters** including drafting documents and undertaking records searches
- Comply with recordkeeping business rules in creating, updating and filing records
- Assist with development of documentation and reports
- Respond to enquiries and requests for information
- Assist the team/unit to coordinate activities that support the implementation of team projects.

#### **Essential requirements of the role**

- Appointments are subject to reference checks. Some roles may also require the following checks/ clearances:
- National Criminal History Record Check in accordance with the Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Working with Children Check clearance in accordance with the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012

#### **About you**

In addition to meeting the essential requirements, the ideal candidate must demonstrate:

- Extensive experience in providing administrative support in a high-volume environment
- Experience with a variety of software applications
- Strong verbal and written communication skills
- Ability to work with minimal supervision, prioritising your own workload and managing competing deadlines to a high level of accuracy.

#### **PAIR WORK**

- Working in pairs, see if you can find other ways of saying the same thing for at least six of the words or phrases that the trainer has put on the whiteboard:

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#### **CLASS DISCUSSION**

- Have you ever tailored your CV to a job application using the key words in the advert?
- Do you think you have to do this only once or, to some extent anyway, every time you apply for a role?

#### 4. SOFT SKILLS

More and more, employers are looking for what you might call ‘soft skills’. These are not qualifications; nor are they ‘hard’ skills - knowing how to do something – like make an espresso or being able to write a piece of music or shear a sheep. Soft skills – certain personal qualities - are vital in the workplace but identifying them can sometimes be a little tricky. One way of finding out about your own soft skills is to ask the people around you: what they think your personal attributes are.

#### CLASS ACTIVITY: VIDEO

Watch this video as a class.

What are soft skills?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tiy2LONr050>

#### PAIR WORK

Here are a variety of words that could be either a qualification, a hard skill or a soft skill. Working with your classmate, put each word into the correct column in the chart below.

CERTIFICATE IV IN ACCOUNTING	PUNCTUAL	EDITING
TIME MANAGEMENT	CERTIFICATE III IN AGED CARE	HARD WORKING
WELL-PRESENTED	RELIABLE	FIRST AID CERTIFICATE
FAST AND ACCURATE TYPIST	KEEN TO LEARN	CUSTOMER SERVICE
DRIVERS LICENCE	SOFTWARE TESTER	MICROSOFT OFFICE SPECIALIST (EXCEL)
SUPERVISING OTHERS	RESPONSIBLE SERVICE OF ALCOHOL/RESPONSIBLE SERVICE OF GAMBLING	ENTHUSIASTIC

## SOFT SKILLS

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WHO WE ARE?

WHAT WE DO?





QUALIFICATIONS	HARD SKILLS	SOFT SKILLS

**CLASSWORK**

- Have a look at the soft skills list in Appendix I.
- Find 3 – 5 soft skills that you believe you have.
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- Report back to the class what you think is correct for you.

**DISCUSSION**

- Are these soft skills listed on your resume?
- If not, how – and where - on the resume (or cover letter) would you list them?  
(Answer here):

## 5. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

What does a great resume need to have? Well, here are some of the essentials. The overall 'picture' of you should be as someone who's appropriate for the role being applied for: a quality applicant who is honest, lists his/her career succinctly, is locatable (phone & email) and is enthusiastic about the job. Double-check:

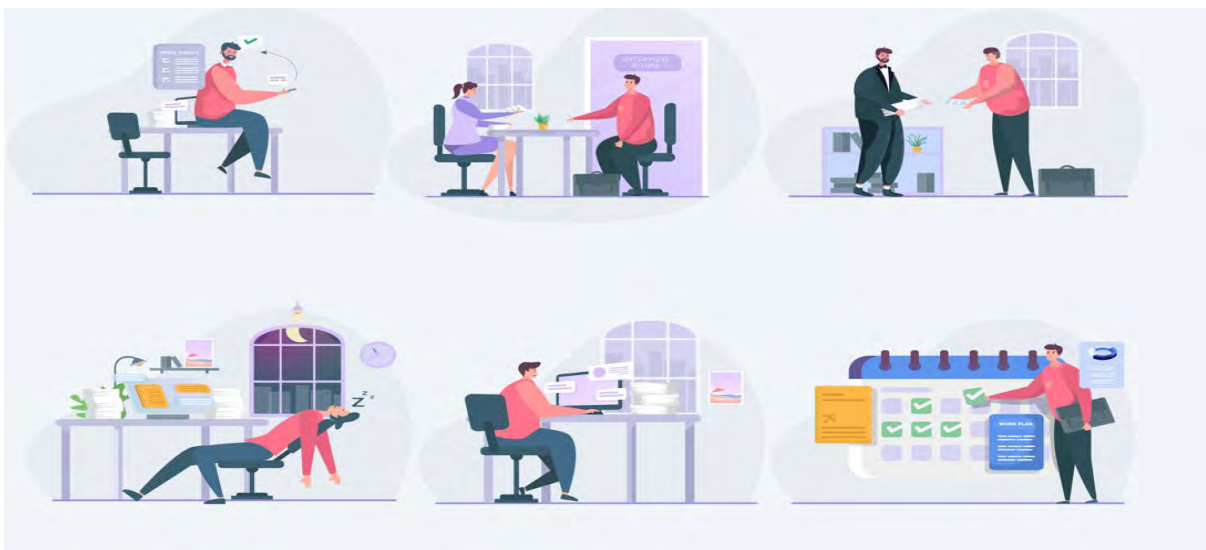
- It's up-to-date! Make sure everything you've achieved is in there
- It balances responsibilities and achievements. Employers don't just want to know what you were supposed to be doing, they want to know how well you did it! Give them about 50-50 of both. For 'achievements' it should read as 'achieved team targets consistently year on year', or 'maintained customer satisfaction rating of 90%'.
- Ensure phone, email and social media links are up to date
- Isn't longer than 2 pages; 3 pages max for a senior or more mature person
- Has a personal summary at the top. 3 – 4 lines summarising who you are and what you bring to any potential employer. You can adjust this 'pitch' for every job application you put through, changing words slightly to suit the role.
- Your most recent professional experience should then be at the top and then go backwards in reverse chronological order.
- Education could come before experience or after it; it really depends how strongly the employer is emphasising qualifications. If having a qualification is a deal-breaker, why not put it before the experience to save the hiring manager the trouble of reading through everything to see if you're qualified.
- Tailor key words to each advert; the key words could be in the personal summary if you are able to include them without sounding too obvious.
- If you had a number of short, contract roles in a brief period of time, this could look odd to an employer unless you state that they were contract roles. So, do so.
- It's probably best to leave out your address, religion, date of birth and marital status.
- Include community work and/or volunteering
- Hobbies: yes, list them but just be careful what you put, depending on the role. If you're going for a role as a tour-guide, 'bungee jumping' might be fine. If you were going for a management level role and you're in your forties, the hiring manager might wonder about that. Just use common sense.
- There are various opinions about putting references on resumes. One point with this is, if you are applying for many jobs, you may have multiple employers ringing your referees. If they have one or two phone calls, it's going to be OK. If they have 10, 15 or 20 phone calls in a short period of time, they're going to start to get annoyed and might not give you the supportive reference you were hoping for. One way around this, particularly if you're going to apply for a lot of jobs, is simply to put 'references on request'.

## 6. READY TO RUMBLE

Having worked through the material in this unit it's now time to work on your own resume and incorporate many of the ideas that have been presented. Put your memory stick in the computer and open up your resume.

### PAIR WORK / CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

1. Have a look at the 'good' and 'bad' resumes in Appendix II. With your pair partner spend a couple of minutes identifying and discussing the good points and the bad points.
2. Refer back to your own resume. See if you can find a couple of bad points in your own resume, then swap resumes and see if you can find any more bad points in your partner's resumes. Correct them as needs be.
3. Do the same with good points. See if you can identify your CV's stronger points and then see if they can be improved.
4. Take your time to go back through the various points in this training unit. When you've really absorbed them, put together your own resume according to what you've learnt. Share the final version with your pair partner. Make sure that the CV;
  - Is succinct: that it avoids long lists of responsibilities. Focus on a balance of responsibilities and accomplishments
  - Has no gaps in time
  - Has a short (2 -3) line summary about you, including your soft skills
  - Gives a mobile phone number and/or email address but not physical address
  - Doesn't have any inappropriate email addresses
  - Includes hobbies, volunteering and references – or 'references on request'
5. Print off your resume.  
The trainer will photocopy all the various resumes and ask you to present your CV and your background to the group, who will offer opinions and advice.



## APPENDIX I:

### HERE'S A LIST OF SOME KEY SOFT SKILLS:

- Communication
- Adaptability
- Resilience
- Resourcefulness
- Teamwork
- Time management
- Emotional intelligence
- Collaboration
- Creativity
- Problem-solving
- Decision-making
- Stress management
- Persuasion
- Active listening
- Empathy
- Interpersonal skills
- Social skills

## APPENDIX II: GOOD RESUME – BAD RESUME





Professional email address

Only include location information that will help make your resume searchable for potential employers

Succinct and active personal summary explaining career objective and value to the organisation

Clearly highlights core skills

Lists most recent and relevant position first to showcase skills and knowledge

Correctly displays relevant training, institution and completion year

Provides a good summary of core responsibilities showcasing experience

# SARAH JOHNS

Mobile: 0401 111 111 | Email: sarahjohns@hotmail.com.au  
Melbourne, VICTORIA, 3004

## KEY SKILLS

- Financial administration
- Advanced in Microsoft Excel
- Exceptional attention to detail

## EDUCATION & TRAINING

### 2013 – Current

Certificate IV in Business Administration | Finance & Payroll Course  
*Australian Institute of Finance*

### 2004 – 2005

National Certificate in Business Administration & Commuting  
*CPIT*

### 1998 – 2003

*Burley South Secondary School*

## PERSONAL SUMMARY

A talented financial administration professional with over two years industry experience, an exceptional eye for detail and a drive to further my career within the financial sector.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Administration Assistant

Westing Finance | August 2017 – Current

As the Administration Assistant I am responsible for providing support to managers and employees, assisting in daily office needs including management of Westing Finance's general administrative activities.

#### Key responsibilities

- Assisted the financial operations team with administrative tasks including; coordinating the full function of accounts payable and accounts receivable with high volume processing daily.
- Coordinating supplier queries, month-end duties, and credit card expenses were also among other day-to-day duties



Displays real and tangible examples of achievements in the role

Consistent formatting

#### Achievements

- Implemented a number of general administrative systems and Excel spreadsheets, removing repetitive manual tasks from the financial advisors. I also learned how to manage accounting documents and assist with portfolios.

#### Receptionist

Lindwood Pharmaceuticals |

January 2016 – July 2017

#### Key responsibilities

- Main responsibilities included welcoming and assisting visitors, as well as answering the switchboard. I also coordinated mail and courier deliveries.

#### Achievements

- Simplified filing and portfolio management systems, which contributed to increased organisational productivity.

#### REFERENCES

Available upon request

A full address is no longer required. Suburb level information is recommended as it makes you more searchable for local roles

Unprofessional email address

Missing contact number

Only include education that's relevant to the role

Doesn't list formal name of certificate or where it was obtained

Inconsistent formatting

Not highlighting most recent and relevant role first

Doesn't explain role or talk to any achievements

Incorrect spelling and grammar

If including your interests, choose activities that relate to the role and illustrate your passion

If you choose to include your references, they need to be defined by their title and organisation they work for

Sarah Johns

124 Berry Street Bondi Sydney  
sarahrules@hotmail.com

...

Education

1992 - 1997 Windsor Primary School

1998 - 2003 Burley South Secondary

Certificate in Business Admin

### WORK HISTORY

2006 - 2009 - Receptionist at Real Estate Agent

Responsibilities

Answering phones

Assisting staff

Doing banking

2010 - current: Administrative assistant at Westing Finance

This was my 1st role with a finance company and I worked with the team to to prepare schedules and cheque payments from there members. Looked after some reporting to.

Interests

I enjoy playing online games such as EVE, minecraft and Clash of the Clans.

I also like Playstation and Xbox games.

References:

Elizabeth Roland: 0422 222 222

Rajesh Patel: 0411 111 111