

Resume Writing & Job Search Strategies for Alumni

How to Avoid Common Resume/Job Application Pitfalls

1. **Do not use an online resume template.** Instead, review a variety of examples and create your own resume format through a blank Word document. Templates are next to impossible to update, and they make you look lazy.
2. **Store a complete history of your work, leadership, and education history on your computer but do not put all of these details on the resume you submit for a job.** Your resume is a snapshot of your related experiences. Keep a history of everything so you can pull what you need for each job.
3. **Don't make the employer search through your resume for related experience.** Make this information jump out at the employer. Use specific language so that it is clear as to why you think you are qualified for the job.
4. **Target your resume for the job you want.** This rule is especially important for anyone who wants to change career fields or job titles. Review the job description and relate your current experience to the job requirements and duties. If you just list your job duties, then it looks like you just want the same job but at a different place.
5. **Target your cover letter for each job.** Generic cover letters to "Whom it may concern" will annoy most hiring managers. Use the cover letter as your opportunity to say why you are the best person for the job. You should also provide specific reasons why the company interests you. Try to direct your letter to a real person.
6. **Focus on transferable skills rather than job duties.** Restating your job duties tells an employer that you want to continue doing the job you are doing. Instead, think about how your job duties have helped you develop the skills needed for the job. Don't state the obvious – help the employer see your experience in a new light.
7. **Keep it brief and use your space wisely.** One-page resumes are the best, but if you must have two pages, the most important information goes on the first page. What experience most closely relates to the qualifications and duties?
8. **Use a "Summary of Qualifications" section to grab an employer's interest.** Use this section at the beginning of your resume to emphasize your qualifications. Items such as years of experience, training, recognitions, and specific job related skills may be used. Choose qualifications that you truly have and can back-up during the interview. Avoid lists of random key words that may lack meaning to an employer.
9. **Proofread, proofread, and proofread!** Typos and grammatical errors in your resume, cover letter, and online application may eliminate you immediately from jobs.
10. **Spend time on the online application.** Maybe you don't have time or you think it's redundant, but it's important to take your time to complete it. Think of it as your first opportunity to show you can follow directions.

Resume Types: Chronological vs. Functional

Most job seekers use the **traditional chronological resume**, showing their work experience in reverse chronological order. This type of resume puts a great deal of emphasis on job titles. You can also divide

your different work experience into categories such as “Marketing Experience” to emphasize related experience.

If you are a career changer, have gaps in your employment, or feel as though you are pigeon-holed into certain jobs, you may want to consider a **functional resume**. A functional resume allows you to identify 3 – 5 skills related to the job and then match your bulleted phrases to the skills rather than the specific jobs you have had. To document your work and leadership history, you would have a list of those experiences with dates and titles at the end of your resume.

Paragraphs vs. Bulleted action phrases

Employers are getting hundreds of resumes for one job opening. You want your skills and experience to jump out at the reader, so bulleted action phrases is what will get the employer’s attention. If you were a hiring manager reviewing over 100 resumes, which would you want to read?

Cover Letters: Do I really need one?

If a resume ended up on your desk or in your email without a letter, wouldn’t you wonder why you received it? A cover letter is your chance to tell the employer what job you want and why you’re the best person for it. A targeted cover letter shows that you took the time to match your skills and experience with the job and that you know about the organization. Sending the same generic letter to everyone does not produce results.

Beyond Your Resume...Other Ways to Get Noticed by Employers

- **Make personal connections with companies and hiring managers.** If there is an opportunity to attend a career fair or networking event where the company will be present, then be there! Everything may be online, but you want to stand out among the hundreds who have applied. The individual may not be the right person, but if you make a good impression, this person may be the foot in the door you needed.
- **Create a LinkedIn Account.** Many recruiters use LinkedIn to source candidates. Take the information from your resume and include it on your profile at www.linkedin.com and begin making connections. **GC Alumni can also join the Georgia College Alumni Linked In Group to make networking connections.**
- **Expand your professional online presence.** Trying to get into a competitive field, especially one in a creative area? Start your own blog or topical Twitter page. You never know who might connect with you.
- **Always send a thank you email or note.** This step is important even for telephone interviews because it allows you to reiterate your interest and qualifications.
- **Research the organization prior to the interview and prepare a few of your own questions.** They *will* ask you why you want to work for them. You want to have a very clear, specific answer.
- **Dress professionally for the interview, even if you know the environment is casual.**

Are you a GC Alumnus? The Career Center Can Help!

- **Register in Career Connection to access job postings, the employer directory, and upcoming career fairs**
 - Go to www.gcsu.edu/career and click on Alumni Career Services to access Career Connection.
 - Use the menus to search jobs, events, and employers.
 - Upload your resume so that employers can find you.
- Schedule an appointment with a career advisor.
 - Call us at 478-445-5384. Bring a copy of your resume to that appointment.

Thunder T. Cat

Campus Box 42
Milledgeville, GA 31061

thunder.cat@gmail.com
478-445-5384

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Highly motivated and formally trained sales and marketing professional with demonstrated ability to exceed performance goals, lead others, improve customer satisfaction levels, solve problems and build lasting relationships.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of _____, Major, GPA: 3.0
Georgia College, Milledgeville, GA, May 2013

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Assistant Manager Aug 2013 - present
Local Business, Milledgeville, GA

- Negotiate prices with vendors to reduce costs by 15%
- Train, coach, and motivate new employees to reach sales goals
- Develop and implemented a marketing plan that increased store revenue by 30% in year one, 40% in year two
- Analyze financial data to compile quarterly reports
- Maximize operating costs by revamping inventory and ordering system

Part Time Telesales Representative May - Aug 2009, 2010, 2011
Hunter Telemarketing, Inc., Atlanta, GA

- Performed cold calling to purchasing managers of manufacturing companies in the Southeastern Region. Averaged over 50 calls per day, and hot prospect development percent was the highest in the department - 3.8%.
- Worked with Account Executives on scheduling presentations, distributing literature, and conducting GoToMeeting online presentations.
- Assisted in closing sales by answering technical questions through external research and internal use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system

LEADERSHIP

President April 2015 - present
Community Organization

- Supervised and mentored Executive Board members
- Worked with the treasurer to balance the budget for the first time in 5 years
- Improved communication with other community organizations and local businesses through the implementation of a monthly e-newsletter
- Initiated a communication plan for the Recruitment Committee, resulting in a 25% increase in attendance at prospective member events

Chair

Oconee River 5K

- Led a 10-member committee to plan, market, and implement a 5K that raised over \$10,000 for a local charity
- Established and fostered relationships with local businesses to raise \$5000 in sponsorships

INVOLVEMENT

Member, American Marketing Association
Volunteer, Habitat for Humanity

COMPUTER SKILLS

Proficient in Microsoft Office: PowerPoint, Word, Excel, Money, Publisher
Salesforce.com CRM System,
Experience using social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Wordpress

Writing an Effective Cover Letter

What is the purpose of the cover letter? The cover letter tells an employer why they are receiving your resume and for which job you are applying. Study the job description so that you can specifically communicate what you are applying for and how your skills and experience best match the position. You can practice writing a cover letter but you will have to write a new one each time you apply for a job. If you do not change your cover letter with each job application, you will be less likely to convince a potential employer that you really want the job.

When do you send a cover letter? If you are applying for a job by mailing, emailing, or faxing a resume, you should always send a cover letter. Pay close attention to the job posting to which you are applying. In most instances, the application process will require both a resume and a cover letter.

What if I apply for a job on-line? If the online process allows you upload a cover letter, then ALWAYS send a cover letter. Read the directions and act accordingly. If you are emailing the resume, attaching a cover letter in addition to a brief but professional email message is very acceptable.

Do I take a cover letter to a job fair or to an on-campus interview? No. The person is meeting you face-to-face so a cover letter is unnecessary.

THUNDER T. CAT

123 Main Street • Milledgeville, GA • (478) 445-5384 • thunder.cat@gmail.com

November 1, 2015

Ms. Jane Grey
Director of Human Resources
Jenkins, James, & Jordan, LLC.
111 North St.
Atlanta, GA 32121

Dear Ms. Grey:

I recently read an article in the Atlanta Business Chronicle that discussed your company's plan to expand in the Marietta area. Since reading that article, I noticed your posting for Sales Associates to support the growth in that region. I plan to relocate to Marietta this fall and believe my proven track record in exceeding sales goals makes me a strong candidate for the position.

In my current role, I have managed, trained, and coached a team of salespeople to exceed company sales goals by 15% each quarter. Your posting indicates that you want someone with strong interpersonal and communication skills who consistently exceed performance expectations. Those words characterize the qualities that helped me lead my team to achieve these sales goals as well as to garner \$5000 in sponsorships for a community event that I managed.

Enclosed is my resume, but I look forward to meeting with you in person to discuss how my skills and experience would benefit your company. Please contact me at (478) 444-1234 bswan@email.com at your convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Thunder T. Cat

Although you can follow the typical business letter format for writing your address, an easy and eye catching option is to copy your resume heading to the top of the cover letter.

Date you are writing the letter

Address of the person you are writing

Salutation: Always write to a person. Take the time to find out the hiring manager's name or appropriate title.

Your first paragraph explains why you are writing. Include information such as:

- 1) Why you are interested
- 2) Willingness to relocate (if applicable)
- 3) How you found out about the job and/or how the position relates to your goals

Paragraph 2 is your opportunity to sell yourself. You can discuss information such as:

- 1) A direct (and sincere) interest you have in what the organization does
- 2) Courses you have taken
- 3) Other related work experience/skills
- 4) Class projects that might be related

Paragraph 3 is where you create a plan of action:

- 1) What will you do next?
- 2) Thank the person for their time or indicate your eagerness to speak with them further

Closing: Sincerely is the best way to end a business letter.

Showcase Your Transferable Skills with a Functional Resume

The traditional chronological resume is just one way to do a resume. By organizing your experience by skill sets related to the job you want, an employer automatically sees how you fit the job description. If you have felt like people are overlooking you because of unrelated job titles and industries or lack of paid work experience, this format could improve your chances. However, you must be truthful in your descriptions and be able to back up your claims with concrete examples during an interview. While this format allows you to be more creative, you must still be honest.

NAME

Address • City, State Zip Code • (Area Code) Phone Number
E-mail Address

OBJECTIVE

Career in Human Resources

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Two years of management experience in a customer service environment
- Skilled in developing hiring solutions and facilitating conflict resolution
- Developed interpersonal skills, having dealt with a diverse set of professionals, clients, and staff
- Proficient in Microsoft Office, Adobe Illustrator, and social media tools

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

B.S., Sociology, Minor: Spanish, GPA: 3.2
Georgia College, Milledgeville, GA, December 2013

RELEVANT SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Recruitment

- Worked with executive board and current membership to create a strategic recruitment plan to be implemented over a three-year period
- Led recruitment team to meet fall membership and retention goals
- Contacted local universities to improve the quality of hires
- Developed and implemented a recruitment, hiring and retention plan for new hires

Personnel Management

- Hired, trained, scheduled, and supervised a team of baristas
- Conducted performance reviews and monitored progress on individual improvement plans
- Maintained records of all new and returning members, reporting goals and outcomes to the central office
- Worked with Standards Chair to create improvement plans and monitor performance

Training

- Trained new hires on company and store policies and procedures
- Led recruitment trainings in small groups to implement strategic recruitment plan

WORK AND LEADERSHIP HISTORY

Assistant Manager, Barista Starbucks	Aug 2012 – present Macon, GA
Vice-President, Membership & Recruitment Zeta Tau Alpha, GC Chapter	Sept 2010 – May 2012 Milledgeville, GA
Office Assistant Office of Financial Aid, Georgia College	August 2009 – May 2010

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Milledgeville Jaycees

Who should use a Functional Resume?

New graduates whose experience does not show a clear career path as well as career-changers can benefit from a functional resume. Someone returning to school for a new program, a stay-at-home mom going back to work, or military personnel transitioning into civilian life might find this format useful as well. You might also use a functional resume if you have had the same job duties at all jobs and do not want to repeat yourself.

Education

List schools/institutions from which you obtained a degree, certificate or specialized training. Start with most recent first and then go back in time.

Skills

Present your work experience by listing your most important skills and experience which pertain to the job for which you are applying. Then describe several activities and accomplishments from all your jobs and life experiences, to document each of these skills.

Experience History

List the organizations from which you gained or used the skills and special knowledge areas mentioned above. Be sure to include the dates, job title, and organization name.

You can also include Leadership, Volunteer, and Academic Projects in your history list. However, make sure that you use the appropriate terminology so that they know the experience was unpaid.

Additional Categories

To list other activities, you can add an Involvement section. A summary section is a great place to grab the attention of the employer. Perhaps the job requires at least one year of work experience in a particular industry. If you have that requirement, you can highlight that information by putting it into a summary.

RESUME ACTION VERBS

When describing your work and leadership experiences, start each bulleted phrase with a strong action verb. Use the words listed to create a clear picture of your experience. The **underlined** words below are especially good for pointing out **accomplishments**.

Management Skills

administered
analyzed
assigned
attained
chaired
consolidated
contracted
coordinated
delegated
developed
directed
evaluated
executed
improved
increased
organized
oversaw
planned
prioritized
produced
recommended
reviewed
scheduled
strengthened
supervised

Communication Skills

addressed
arbitrated
arranged
authored
collaborated
convinced
corresponded
developed
directed
drafted
edited
enlisted
formulated
influenced
interpreted
lectured
mediated
moderated
negotiated
persuaded
promoted
publicized
reconciled
recruited
spoke
translated
wrote

Research Skills

clarified
collected
critiqued
diagnosed
evaluated
examined
extracted
identified
inspected
interpreted
interviewed
investigated
organized
reviewed
summarized
surveyed
systematized

Technical Skills

assembled
built
calculated
computed
designed
devised
engineered
fabricated
maintained
operated
overhauled
programmed
remodeled
repaired
solved
upgraded

Teaching Skills

adapted
advised
clarified
coached
communicated
coordinated
demystified
developed
enabled
encouraged
evaluated
explained
facilitated
guided
informed
instructed
persuaded
set goals
stimulated
trained

Financial Skills

administered
allocated
analyzed
appraised
audited
balanced
budgeted
calculated
computed
developed
forecasted
managed
marketed
planned
projected
researched

Creative Skills

acted
conceptualized
created
customized
designed
developed
directed
established
fashioned
founded
illustrated
initiated
instituted
integrated
introduced
invented
originated
performed
planned
revitalized
shaped

Helping Skills

assessed
assisted
clarified
coached
counseled
demonstrated
diagnosed
educated
expedited
facilitated
familiarized
guided
motivated
referred
rehabilitated
represented

Clerical or Detail Skills

approved
arranged
catalogued
classified
collected
compiled
dispatched
executed
generated
implemented
inspected
monitored
operated
organized
prepared
processed
purchased
recorded
retrieved
screened
specified
systematized
tabulated
validated

More Verbs

achieved
expanded
improved
pioneered
reduced (losses)
resolved (problems)
restored
spearheaded
transformed

JOB and INTERNSHIP SEARCH STRATEGIES

Before you get started, ask yourself these questions:

- Are you applying to just anything or do you have a specific focus?
- How long have you been working on your job or internship search? If you just started, relax. It takes some time!
- How many hours per week do you devote to your job search?
- Are you flexible with your location, industry, job title, salary, etc.?
- How many jobs do you apply for each week? Do you often eliminate yourself before you even apply?
- Do you look for postings on big name job boards or do you conduct specific company and industry research to find postings?
- Have you used employer resources available through the GC Career Center?

A typical professional job or internship search will take six to nine months and perhaps longer in a bad economy.

During this time, you should devote at least an hour per day on your job or internship search in order to see results. A professional job or internship search takes more time because you have career goals and specific interests, skills, and experience to offer an employer. However, adding some flexibility to your job and internship search parameters can help. For instance, if you can't change geographic locations, you could expand the types of industries or job titles you will consider.

The following job search strategies should be part of your job search routine.

1. **Target your resume AND cover letter to match each position.** Even if the position is in the same field or industry, the position descriptions may differ. Always find ways to speak to each job duty, qualifications, and skills noted in the position description.
2. **Go beyond the big name job boards – Go to specific company websites.** Companies have to pay Monster to post a job, but it's free for a company to post a job on their own website.
3. **Use Career Connection to find positions and conduct company research.** We post jobs and internships from employers who want to hire our graduates. You can also use the Employer Directory to conduct research on companies in our database.
4. **Attend a Georgia College Career Event or Fair.** We offer several employer events and fairs each year including the Senior Picnic, Internship Fair, Career Opportunities Fair in Atlanta, Career Expo, Accounting Career Fair, IT Career Fair, Teacher Recruitment Day, Nursing Career Expo, and the Statewide Career Fair in Atlanta.
5. **Create a LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) account and start your professional social network.** Your LinkedIn account is an online version of your resume, and recruiters are now starting to source potential candidates this way. Join groups, such as the Georgia College Alumni Group, to connect professionally with people with similar interests.
6. **Conduct Informational Interviews.** Use LinkedIn to search for people who work in your field of interest or at your dream company. Do you share a common group? Do they accept messages? If so, reach out and ask for the opportunity to get advice. Asking for a job is annoying, but asking for advice is flattering.
7. **Create a list of companies that interest you and go to their career page on a regular basis.** Companies will always post on their website but may not pay to post on big job boards, especially if they only have one opening.
8. **Use job search aggregators such as Indeed and Simply Hired.** These sites allow you to pull jobs from company websites that fit your parameters. This technique will help you look beyond the name-brand companies.
9. **Do your research before an interview or networking event.** Before you meet an employer, you need to know as much as you can about their company and opportunities so that you can articulate why you want to work for them. This includes preparing a list of open-ended questions for the employer.
10. **Use niche industry or professional association job boards.** Use a search engine to search for "Your field + professional association" to get started. When searching job boards, check the source and make sure it's a credible organization.
11. **Research staffing agencies or professional recruiting companies in your area or within your industry.** As long as they charge the employer and not the job seekers, these organizations are often the way to get your foot in the door.
12. **Follow companies on Twitter.** Follow companies and job boards. Real recruiters often manage these boards, posting notices each time a job is posted on their website. Companies can follow you too, so you'll want to keep this account professional.
13. **Follow-up after job interviews.** Follow-up includes an email or hand-written thank you note sent to the employer within 24 hours of the interview. Emails are timely and allow the conversation to continue.
14. **Create your own experience if you do not have enough experience in your field.** Write a blog; create a twitter or weekly podcast following on an area of expertise; look for freelance opportunities. Look for opportunities on campus or the community to volunteer and get experience.