

Executive Resume Guidelines

When you are at an executive or other senior-level position, employers and recruiters will look at you very differently than they did earlier in your career. If you will be the one initiating a job or career change and you have left your last employer or you are about to leave, you will need to learn how to overcome a negative bias from employers and recruiters.

What worked for you in the past?

During the early years of your career, potential employers and recruiters relied more on your academic qualifications, technical certifications, and your attitude and personality because you had limited or no actual work experience.

As your career progressed, you may have been contacted by recruiters or you may have contacted employers directly. During that time you were evaluated based on your work experience to date and the employer's perception of your desire and ability to progress your career and, perhaps, adapt to a change in industry.

What changes occur at the executive level?

At an executive level, the rules change significantly. You will now be evaluated mainly on your skills and work achievements over the last few years (usually ten) in the industry of the potential employer. In most situations, recruiters (since they are paid by their employer-clients) will focus only on candidates that have the skills and experience in the industry the employer wants.

How does your resume need to adapt to your current situation?

Since you will now be evaluated by employers and recruiters on what you are best at doing, your resume must now change its focus from a retrospective description of you to a prospective statement that demonstrates your best skills and experience that can be a resource to those organizations that need what you bring to the table.

Think of your resume similarly to how companies prepare brochures. Company brochures focus on what they are best at doing specifically for their target audience. Similarly, your resume needs to focus on your particular skills, strengths, and capabilities in the industry where you are most experienced.

How do you verbally tell people what you say in your resume?

The resume example on the following pages illustrates how to prepare an executive resume. The information you include on the first half of the first page is the most critical part of your resume because it will be the language you must also use when you are networking. I call that your Verbal Business Card. You might have heard it called your "Elevator pitch."

Your resume and your verbal business card must be clear and consistent about what you want and what you bring to the table. Be factual and let the listener apply judgment about your ability to adapt to different situations and even a different industry. Connect the dots for a different industry if you think it is appropriate but, remember, they are the only ones that will make that judgment.

Executive resumes should include the following information in the sequence listed. The numbers refer to the example on the next page.

❶ Who are you, where do you live, and how do I contact you?

❷ What do you want?

Describe the *position* you want, *industry* or *business*, and *location* where you want to work (if it needs clarification). Be as specific as possible. Make sure that your stated objective is consistent with what you verbally tell others when they ask you what position you are looking to find.

❸ What do you bring to the table?

Companies hire executives and others in senior-level positions for their skills and experience. To focus on yours, make two sections: one that says what you are best at doing (your key skills) and one that demonstrates it (achievements or career highlights that demonstrate your key skills).

- ◆ *Key Skills*: List only ***your top three*** skills. If you list more, you increase the risk that readers will skip reading this section, thereby losing your opportunity to focus their attention on what you are best at doing.
- ◆ *Achievements*: Achievement stories are critical because they are credible and memorable, and they *demonstrate* your skills. The Key Skills and the Achievements/Accomplishments/Highlights sections must be consistent with each other. Use bullet points and list ***no more than three***.

❹ What is your work history?

- ◆ Recruiters and employers will examine your career path, looking for a logical career progression. If it isn't there, you might want to cover this subject in your cover letter. List your most recent employer first. Start with the employer's name and location, followed by your most recent position. Show the beginning and ending ***month*** and ***year*** for each position held. If the industry is not readily apparent by the company's name, describe the industry and the company's size.
- ◆ Do not represent your most recent employer as your "current" employer. If your prior employment has ended and you are in transition, indicate when your last employment ended.
- ◆ Show periods of self-employment separately. See example on following page.
- ◆ If you choose, you ***may*** briefly summarize employment more than 10 years earlier by listing the employer, the highest position you attained, and the dates of employment (here you can limit the dates to year only).

❺ What are your educational qualifications?

List university degrees and technical certifications. Do *not* include company training or non-academic classes unless they resulted in an industry-recognized certificate of technical proficiency.

❻ What else is important about you for the position you want?

Include other skills (e.g., foreign language proficiency) or involvement in activities that would be of interest to a prospective employer and are clearly relevant to the position you are seeking or the industry in which you want to work. Do not list sports, hobbies, or any organization that implies a religious, political, racial, or ethnic connection, unless that involvement would enhance your prospects with the employer or person reading your resume. Omit age, marital status, children, health, reference to referrals, or anything else that is not employment related.

Executive resume example (First page)

Use 12 pt type for your name and 9 - 10 pt for address and contact details. Use 12 pt for resume headers and text.

Shirley Thomas ❶
1325 E. Napster Dr., Apt. 301D
Silicon Valley, CA 90345-1234
Tel: 909-555-3689
Email: sthomas@legacy.com

For illustration only. Do not use a border on your resume.

EMPLOYMENT OBJECTIVE ❷
A CTO/VP of Technology position in a well-financed, fast-growing, eCommerce company with a team-oriented culture.

*Or "CAREER OBJECTIVE"
Use one short paragraph!*

KEY SKILLS ❸

*Or "CAPABILITIES"
Use no more than three bullets.*

- Developing technology to solve strategic business problems
- Architecting systems
- Developing software products and Web-based operations

ACHIEVEMENTS ❹

*Or "ACCOMPLISHMENTS" or
"CAREER HIGHLIGHTS"
Use no more than three.*

- Created the software "Office Assistant" concept and implemented it in Microsoft Windows.
- Managed a team that built a complex supply chain communications infrastructure and an exchange in one month. Delivered the production software running on in-house Web servers in another two months, on time and on budget. Product accounts for 30% of the company's sales.
- Hired a permanent staff of 25 technical people (Developers, QA, and Network Administrators) for a new dot com startup in less than three months, despite today's highly competitive job market.

WORK EXPERIENCE ❺

*Or EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE or
PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE, etc.*

BizTrade.com, Eureka, CA - Chief Technology Officer (CTO) **Mar 11 - Present**
Offered the CTO position after a short consultancy period for this B2B supply chain services startup. As a part of the executive team, took the company from an idea to a Web-based ASP with 75 employees. Managed the technology development, including software, hardware, communications, infrastructure, vendors, and 27 technical people, as well as being prominent in planning, budgeting, recruiting, and mentoring. Managed ASP, HTML, VB COM+, SQL Server, Java, and Oracle technology-based custom software development teams and vendors.

Macro Discovery, Las Vegas, NV - President and Owner **Jan 08 - Feb 11**
Started a custom software development and consultancy firm, including Internet development. Projects included automated commodity trading systems, NBA, NFL, MLB, NHL, and MLS game blackouts, 401K Administration Systems, Email, Workflow, and Imaging Systems. Clients ranged from small companies to large corporations (PurchasingPower.com, Ford Motor Co., BMW, and NorthStar Motors) on projects varying from 2 months to 2 years, using technologies such as C++, MFC, SQL, Visual Basic, ODBC, SQL Server, Access, HTML, CGI, OLE Automation, COM/DCOM, and Active X Controls.

NorthStar Motors, Detroit, MI - Software Specialist and Project Manager **Jan 04 - Dec 07**
Developed a Windows-and-Unix-based National Automated Electronic Software Distribution and Installation product, which earned a patent. Managed four developers. Enhanced the installation programs for NorthStar Advantage EX, an inventory management information system. Used C & C++, and MFC.

Executive resume example (Second page)

Shirley Thomas
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Put your name and a page number in a header so it will always appear at the top of the second page.

DMJW, Chicago, IL – Director of Software Development **Jan 98 - Dec 03**

Directed the company's entire software development effort from concept to delivery, including recruiting, planning, and budgeting. Managed seven programmers. Presented the product overview and vision for large customers. Developed multi-platform networked multimedia products running on Windows 3.0, Macintosh, and Unix environments, using C++, SQL, SMALLTALK, XVT, and TCP/IP.

BMW, Advanced R&D, Chicago, IL – Sr. Programmer and Software Architect **Jul 96 - Jan 98**

Designed and implemented a front-end newsletter layout and publishing graphics workstation on 386-PCs, using C++. Invented a unique graphical tool for formatting and manipulating feature story layouts.

Xerox Corporation, Mountain, NJ – Senior Programmer **Mar 94 - Jul 96**

Developed the Interpress Programmer's Library, Diablo 630 & Xerox 2700 to Interpress converters, as well as an Interpress printer driver for Microsoft Word in C/MSDOS. Co-designed the Arabic & Hebrew bi-directional multi-language text-handling for Xerox workstations (in MESA). Designed various algorithms to handle the never-before-discovered problems of computerized bi-directional text. Implemented the floating accents for the Xerox Star Word Processor.

DOD, Washington, DC – Research Scientist **Jan 92 - Feb 94**

Developed a full screen bi-directional Arabic & English text editor and a device-independent text formatter. Built bilingual system utility programs for a custom built CP/M environment (in C and ASSEMBLER).

George Washington University, Washington, DC – Graduate Teaching Fellow **1992 – 1993**

Taught graduate and undergraduate Digital Computer Design courses. Created a CP/M compatible operating system for slave Z80 computers, MP/M interface, program transfer, and execution utilities for a multi-processor system (in Z80-ASSEMBLER).

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS ⑤

MBA in Business Management, Northwestern University, 1992

M.Sc. in Computer Science, George Washington University, 1991

B.Sc. in Electronic Communications Engineering, University of Pennsylvania, 1990

Microsoft Certified Professional, 1996

Microsoft University, Windows Programming Courses, 1993

University of Phoenix, Faculty Certification, 1996

TEACHING EXPERIENCE ⑥

- “Information Technology and Computer Programming,” Michigan State University, 2005 – 2007
- “Computer Design and Computer Programming,” George Washington University, 1993 – 1994

For more detailed job and career search help for executives and others at senior-level positions:

- Go to www.ExecGlobalNet.com.
- Purchase *12 Steps to a New Career* available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.