

Changing Your Resume Too Often

Tom followed the advice of several career advisors and sent a draft of his resume to recruiters and friends, asking them for comments on how he might improve it. Tom soon realized that the expression "Be careful what you wish for" applied to him. He soon found himself constantly revising his resume, sometimes wondering if the current version was actually identical to the one he started with 20 versions ago.

Then he found that when someone asked him for a second copy of his resume or wanted him to send a copy to a third party, he had trouble remembering which version he had originally sent. He knew it would look bad if he asked them to send a copy of his own resume so he could make sure he sent the correct version.

How could Tom have avoided wasting all that time rewriting his resume? How could he have prevented the subsequent problems? Let's review some basics about resumes.

Generally, you should prepare only one version of your resume. In rare situations, you might need to prepare an alternate version, such as when you're pursuing two different career tracks. But if that's the case, you'll always know which version went where.

Readers of your resume are looking for simple answers to the following questions:

1. Who are you, and how do I contact you? (Your contact details.)
2. What position, industry and location are you seeking? (Your career search objective.)
3. What do you bring to the table? (List your three strongest skills or capabilities.)
4. How do I know you have the skills and capabilities you claim? (Recount up to three achievement stories that demonstrate the skills and capabilities you claim you have.)
5. Where did you work? (List your employment history in reverse chronological order, with descriptions of the companies, your roles, and other achievements.)
6. What else is important that I should know about you? (List language skills, education, qualifications, awards, etc. List only those items that potential employers would consider important to them.)

Your resume is finished only when you can say that it's an accurate reflection of you, and when others who know you will agree with that.

Very important: Practice "telling" your resume to others so your verbal message is consistent with the printed version. In my search practice, I always asked candidates to explain what they wanted and describe their background and skills. As they spoke, I compared what they said with what I was reading in their resume. I often saw two different people, and neither was invited back for a second interview.

The purpose of your resume is to cause the recipients to WANT to know more about you. They will have to contact you for more information.

One client who followed my guidelines to prepare his resume subsequently sent it to be reviewed by a recruiter he knew. The recruiter said he should add more information to his resume about one particular aspect of his experience so recruiters could save time by being able to decide whether to call him. My client was about to revise his resume simply to accommodate one recruiter.

I told him that if he did revise his resume, the recruiter would have no need to contact him, and that would defeat the purpose of the resume. Recruiters often want your resume to include more information than it really should. It's in their best interest not to have to call you for clarification, but it's in YOUR best interest to have them call.

When you prepare your resume, use 12-point type and leave a 1-inch margin around the page. Keep it to two pages, and use a good quality white or off-white paper. Maintain a simple layout by using paragraphs. Don't use columns, boxes or unusual symbols because they might not translate into other software programs or even versions of the same software. Limit your use of bullets to just key information you want to highlight. If you have more than three bullets in a row, the points you are trying to highlight lose significance. Instead, the reader might assume you use bullets because you don't know how to write a paragraph.

So now you've finished your resume. Before you send it out, have a few close colleagues review it to make sure it flows well and is an easy read. Ask those who are familiar with your experience to read it and make sure they agree with what you say about your skills, achievements and experience. Since they may be your referrals, you'll want them to agree with what you are saying.

Now go take charge of your career!

Carl Wellenstein is an employment and career strategist located in Southern California and is the author of [12 Steps to a New Career](#). He helps those in mid-career facilitate career advancement, expedite job changes, and pursue new career destinies. These stories reflect actual experiences, modified to protect the identities of individuals and employers. If you have a question you would like answered, contact Carl at www.ExecGlobalNet.com.