

Resume Tips When Former Employer is Convicted of Fraud – Tip 7

You were shocked when you heard that the CEO of your company had been indicted for fraud and the company would close. While most employees left soon after the announcement, you were one of the few who stayed to help wind down operations and then – poof – your job was gone, along with your retirement savings and 401k.

To add insult to injury, the economy is in the tank and job growth is not expected to recover for many months. You wonder how your experience at the failed company will be perceived by employers and recruiters.

As you begin to prepare your resume, you wonder how you should cover it. You're pretty sure you can't leave a few lines of blank space on your resume where you would show your last employer. You probably can't refer to them as "Confidential Employer" and think you'll then be able to cover it in a conversation. You wonder how best you should deal with it.

If you were part of the problem, you won't have to worry because the government might be providing you with room and board for the next few years anyway. If you weren't a participant to the problem, however, the fact that you worked there may not be enough to taint you in the eyes of prospective employers.

Purpose of resume

Let's review some resume basics first. Your resume is your brochure and, as such, it should focus readers' attention on what you want, what you bring to the table, what you've achieved for others, and then on your chronological career history and other capabilities. Here's an effective format:

Name and contact details – The reader wants to know your name and how to contact you.

What position are you looking for – Include a job title, indicate the industry where you want to work, and indicate a location if that is a critical part of your decision.

What are you best at doing – List only your top three skills using bullets. Don't use vague statements like "communication skills." Describe the specifics of your skill in the area. If you list more than three, readers are more likely to ignore them all.

Achievements – Describe two or three achievement stories that demonstrate your top three skills. Use bullets and kept it short. Without demonstrating your top skills, readers may question whether they really are your top skills. Concise achievement stories will be what readers use to remember you and what they will use to tell others about you.

Career history – List your work experience starting with your latest employer. Include objective statements and be brief. You want the focus to be on what you want, your skills, experience and achievements.

Other capabilities – Describe your education and the other qualifications and skills you have that should be of interest to prospective employers. Do not include hobbies or outside interests that are not directly employment related.

Recruiters may tell you to just prepare a chronological resume because they will look at your experience and decide whether you are right for a particular job. That may be fine if you want recruiters to be in charge of your career direction. However, if you prefer being the one in charge, you must craft your resume so that it supports what you want to do and the industry where you want to work. Make only one version of your resume, limit it to two pages, and keep the format simple. Recruiters may ask you to recast your resume to focus on a particular job they say they have. Avoid that temptation if it doesn't accurately reflect what you want and are good at doing.

A culpable employer

You'll notice the above doesn't consider the question of how to address the problems associated with your last employer. That's because your resume is not the place to cover the subject. Your resume should not include any explanatory statements about the situation at your last employer. Doing that will only detract from the purpose of your resume.

Does that mean you should ignore the obvious questions that will arise when someone sees the company on your resume? Of course not! But the place to discuss that subject is in a conversation or in your cover letter that you would include whenever you send your resume.

A cover letter enables you to make a personal statement and bridge the gap between what is reflected in your resume and what you think the recipient wants to know about your last employer. You'll want to address your role in the company openly and honestly but be brief and objective. Don't introduce your personal feelings or offer commentary on ethics. The past is the past and you cannot change it. You've learned from it (some of which might be a perspective or skill that an employer wants) and you now want to focus on the future.

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