

A Well-Written Resume

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OK, you're an amazing security engineer who has so many technical skills that you can't figure out how to fit them all onto your resume. So why isn't anyone calling you in for an interview? Aren't your amazing skills proof that you're worthy of a job offer?

Not anymore. If you think a resume that lists tons of technical experience and certifications is what's going to get you in the door of a new employer, you better think again. The times have really changed, and although technical skills are valuable, they are no longer the determining factor in assessing qualifications for a position.

You've got to document that you're more than just a techie, and the place to begin is with your resume. You've heard the expression that you don't get a second chance to make a first impression. Your resume is the first, and if not written correctly, the only impression you'll have an opportunity to give. Think of it as your personal marketing document, which, if done, should lead to real, live conversation with a hiring authority.

Five Things to Consider When Writing an Effective Resume

1. Before you put pen to paper, you need to do a self-assessment and determine what it is that differentiates you as a candidate. Ask yourself, "What is it that makes me so wonderful? Why would someone want to hire me rather than the next guy?" This requires you to identify your skills and list your accomplishments in a way that a potential employer would find valuable. Your resume needs to show how you can benefit your employer. Just listing your responsibilities and describing what you do isn't enough.

Remember, your resume is an advertisement for you, so make sure it reflects the image that you want to convey.

2. Begin the resume with a positioning statement. The statement should be no more than three or four sentences summarizing your professional profile. Here's where you would list your key areas of expertise, industry experience and credentials. For example:

"Innovative information security professional with over 10 years of experience in the consulting and financial services industry.

Expertise in risk assessment strategies, regulatory compliance and policy development." If you are submitting your resume for a particular position, it is important to tailor this statement to reflect the tone and key words of the job description.

3. Chronological resumes are preferred by most hiring managers and recruiters. It is imperative that you list accurate titles, dates of employment and degrees, as a vast majority of employers do background checks to verify this information. One advantage of a chronological resume is that it allows the resume reviewer to identify trends of increasing responsibility and professional development in your background. If you have industry-specific certifications, list them at the top of your resume along with your

education and degrees. Most employers don't require certifications, but it shows a certain level of commitment to your profession.

4. When describing your professional history, it's often a good idea to list the name, location, type and size of the organization you work for in addition to stating your title. This provides the reader with some context as to the type of environment you've worked in—a useful piece of information when determining organizational fit. Next comes the description, but you need to remember that when you depict your role and responsibilities that nothing will cause the reader to lose interest faster than reading a vanilla job description. Instead, describe your responsibilities and what you actually do in a direct and concise manner. Then, highlight the ways that your work has directly benefited the company or the goals of the organization that you work for. Saving time, improving processes, facilitating cooperation, reducing losses, and saving money are all great differentiators that will make your resume stand out.

For example: “Created and led an attack and penetration team that generated internal revenue of \$500,000. Identified and implemented information security policies and risk assessment strategies which reduced a potential \$4 million in compliance exposures. Reduced information security services expenses by \$100,000 annually and increased their services' effectiveness by 225% by implementing value-added vulnerability assessments and incident response capabilities.” These types of statements should be bulleted throughout your resume following a brief description of your responsibilities for each position you have held.

5. The soft skills that you possess must also be conveyed in a resume. It's important that your resume shows a real understanding of the business that you are in. This is valuable because it allows a prospective employer to recognize that as a security professional, you understand the big picture, not just your area of expertise. More so than ever before, employers look for candidates that have strong interpersonal and relationship-building skills. With very few exceptions, all of our clients have prioritized the need for candidates to be able to “work and play well with others.” The importance of this can't be overstated because it's the ability of the security professional to work with non-security people that builds credibility and understanding. Make sure that your resume emphasizes the ways that your personal interactions have positively impacted lines of business or departments other than security. Finally, the hiring managers that I speak with want to hire people that are passionate about their profession. A way to make sure this comes through in your resume is by acknowledging any extra-curricular work you've done in the field. Examples would include participation in research projects, white papers, speaking engagements, ISSA participation, awards and recognized achievements.

Conclusion

In summary, when it comes to writing a winning resume, security professionals need to find ways to stand out from the crowd. Remember, your

resume is your personal marketing brochure designed to lead to a conversation or meeting. Walk in the shoes of the hiring manager for the position you're going for. If you were her, what would you want to see in a candidate's resume? The advice I've tried to provide in this article is from the insider's perspective. Give some thought to these suggestions and see how your resume stacks up. It's worth the effort because your resume is an important part of your career development toolkit. A well-written resume can be the golden key that opens the door to the next level in your career.

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