Your Resume Should Reflect the Real You

ACM's career consultant, Jack Wilson, answers questions from students about their forthcoming careers in computing and information technology.

Q: I'm about to receive my PhD in Computer Science and am not sure whether I want to go into industry or into teaching. Should I have two different resumes, one for each, or can I use the same one?

A: It is unlikely you would want to use the same resume for dissimilar objectives, as these seem to be. But, candidly, when I see two different resumes describing the same person, I'm tempted to ask, "Which is the real you?"

The reason for my question is that I believe you have a particular career direction that is most appropriate in light of your situation at any point in time. For example: What are your strongest interests? From what accomplishments to you derive the most satisfaction, enjoyment, and reward? What are your personal needs or family circumstances? What are your most marketable skills and strengths? What are your short- and long-term goals?

If you do a reasonable assessment and self-inventory, you will probably discover enough about yourself to lead you in one direction or the other. You may still want to develop two versions of a preliminary resume that will help you in talking with colleagues and advisors, leading toward a decision about which objective is the right one for you at this time.

Q: I've noticed that some people call their resume a CV. What's the difference?

A: CV, short for the Latin term Curriculum Vitae, is sometimes used interchangeably with Resume, but in my experience, there is a difference. I view the Resume as a marketing tool, describing in summary fashion the qualifications of its subject in a promotional way, much as a brochure describes the salient features of a product.

A resume is usually one or two pages long. On the other hand, a CV is typically a longer, more detailed recitation of one's entire career history, including relevant data on such things as papers, presentations, publications, patents, honors, awards, licenses, etc. We often see CVs used in applying for academic positions.

Q: Are there any salary surveys that would help me in considering which positions tend to pay more than others?

A: Yes, there are several specific to the computing and information technology profession. The ones with which I am familiar are conducted either by industry publications or recruiting firms.

In the former category is the annual survey by *Computerworld,* which is available as a reprint from their May 29, 1995 and September 4, 1995 issues. They can be reached by phone at (508) 820-8129 for back issues; and at (508) 820-8125 for reprints.

Among the recruiting firms that publish annual salary surveys is Source Edp, which has offices in major cities throughout North America. Copies of the survey can be obtained by calling the office near you or by writing to P. O. Box 152109, Irving, TX 75015-9831.

Q: I'm interested in doing software development when I graduate and would like to work for a small, growing company. I'm having a hard time determining how to locate these companies, because they don't seem to be coming to our campus. Do you have any suggestions?

A: Yes. One of the publications I use is the CorpTech Directory of Technology Companies, published by Corporate Technology Information Services, Inc. of Woburn, MA. This is a large, four-volume set of data on about 40,000 companies, most of them small (under 1,000 employees), including business units of larger companies. They cover a range of high-technology areas, one of which is Computer Software. The 1995 Directory contains data on 7,579 software companies with employee growth last year at 7.6% and a projected growth next year of 9.5%. The data are organized in a variety of ways: by subheading (applications), by size, and by geographic location. The Directory should be available in the business reference section of a well-stocked library.