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People are freaking out about your resume

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To: Tim menzies <tim@menzies.us>

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Good Monday morning, **Tim**,

We've had over a year of experience now with our powerful, free [Resume Reviewer](#), which does a terrific job at helping you understand what's wrong and what's right with your resume. Over 1 mm people have used it in the past year, and 91% say they found it useful.

In addition, our [Resume Builder](#) helps you create an effective new resume from scratch.

What makes a good resume? I've written this simple 8-minute guide to walk you through the steps. It'll take you 8 minutes to read, probably an hour or two to do, and provide years of benefit in reducing your resume anxiety.

My recommendations below are for a professional with 10 to 25 years experience. For those with fewer than 10 years, you're likely better off with a 1-page resume, for those with more than 25 years and at very senior levels, three may sometimes be appropriate. (But seriously, if that's you, you shouldn't be relying on your own typing skills to market yourself.)

As with any "do-it-yourself" project, the key to success is to not get in over your head. So the instructions below are a simplified version of my best advice, tailored to be achievable by you on your own. If you've got the commitment, moxie, and willpower for "do it yourself", here goes!....

Resume Goal

First, the goal of your resume is **to get you an interview for the job**. You may believe your resume has other purposes:

- To showcase your every achievement
- To justify why you're changing jobs
- To explain why you've left so many, or so few, jobs in your career
- To mention when you received promotions, awards, or recognition
- To describe the size of organization or team or budget you had responsibility for
- To land you a job offer without an interview

Trust me, none of those are the goals of your resume. Actually, don't trust me. [Read our research on how long recruiters spend on your resume.](#) The answer is 6 seconds for the first pass.

The goal of your resume is to get you the interview.

You get the interview by persuading 3 layers of HR people that time spent with you will be worth more than time spent with another candidate. I'll describe below who these 3 layers are -- screeners, recruiters, and hiring managers.

You'll persuade those reviewers by providing **quantifiably proven results** that you can do the job very well.

Resume length and structure

Your resume will be 2 pages total. (Again, if you have less than 10 years experience: 1 page only.)

Your resume will be composed of a professional summary and a chronological detail of your professional success. You should have your contact information at the head of the resume, and your educational background at the bottom of the resume.

<p>Luke Cloud 350 N 4th St Apt 125, New York, NY 10010 luke@lukecloud.com (917) 555-1234</p> <hr/> <p>PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY</p> <p>Sr. Vice President of Sales - Marketing Operations Account Management - PAC Sales - Channel Sales - Business Development</p> <p>Top producing sales person in New York. - Achieved President's Club in 2015 - Managed contracted sales of more than \$150 million. - Liked market share from less than 5% to 25% within 2 years.</p> <hr/> <p>EMPLOYMENT HISTORY</p> <p>Sr. Product Manager, Targent Media 2014 - Present Charlotte, NC</p> <p>Core Products: equipment for all radiology - PAC's technologies: diagnostic radiology, ultrasound, nuclear medicine, dental procedures, CT scan and MRI; oncology-related: patient monitors, ISO, cardiac stress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led a team of 140 account managers, 10 regional managers. • Provided leadership key to the successful transition of company from regional to national market. • Personally interviewed, hired, and trained approximately 100 account managers and 8 managers. • Reported directly to Trend Medical owners and to Allcare National HQ. <p>Product Manager, Targent Media 2012 - 2014 Charlotte, NC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved President's Club in 2013 and placed among top 3% of territories 3 consecutive years. • Generated sales 200% by overruling decision makers that our products were expensive. • Currently rank 10th out of 100 nationwide in achieving sales goals. • Expanded market share to HQ's largest plus (Purave Health) by implementing new strategies. <p>Product Manager, Wabity Media 2009 - 2012 Charlotte, NC</p> <p>Core Products: equipment for all radiology - PAC's technologies: diagnostic radiology, ultrasound, nuclear medicine, dental procedures, CT scan and MRI; oncology-related: patient monitors, ISO, cardiac stress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved President's Club in 2010 and placed among top 3% of territories 3 consecutive years. • Generated sales 200% by overruling decision makers that our products were expensive. 	
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Professional Summary

Your professional summary is a separated list of two or three lines that summarizes your professional ambitions, background, and talents. You'll include 12 -15 phrases of two or three words each in this section. On your resume, you should begin this section with the three or four job titles you want most, and then intersperse the skills and successes...

Job titles: list 3 to 5 job titles of jobs you would actually accept as your next job. By clearly identifying the title you want next, recruiters and HR people begin seeing you in that role, and that helps give context to a diverse work history.

It does not matter that you have never actually had this job title in the past, but it is important that it is a plausible next step in your professional career. A job search that includes both small and large companies will have a broader range of job titles than one specifically focusing on, say, the Fortune 500.

Examples: VP, Marketing • Director, Marketing • Brand Marketing Leader • CMO

Professional competencies: list 4 to 6 core competencies that you possess that are important to your success in the jobs outlined above. They should be skills you currently possess and should be “level appropriate”. I.e., don't list competencies that are obvious or would be assumed for your level. If you're applying for C-suite jobs, listing “time management” or “presentation skills” would be far too junior to mention in your summary.

Examples: Agile Development • Software Architecture • Engineer Recruiting • Technology Innovation

Descriptions of your past success: list 3 to 6 phrases that describe your demonstrated past success. Any type of achievements or attributes for which you have received recognition are appropriate.

Examples: President's Club • Top-producing Saleswoman • Exceeds Quota • Consultative Selling Expert

Chronological detail of your professional success

In this section you will provide a chronological detail of your professional success, starting with your most recent job first. Notice the word choices here, please. We are **detailing** your **success**. We are not listing your past job titles or duties. We are not describing your staff composition or budget size or administrative systems used.

Again, your resume is a marketing document and needs to **persuade** your reviewers that time spent with you will be worthwhile, so we are going to **detail** your **success**.

You'll have about 30 ~ 40 bullet points across all your current and past positions, and each of these will be a marketing bullet point that will make one persuasive argument on your behalf.

After you list company name, employment dates, and your title for each role, the bullet points will be distributed as follows:

- Your most recent, most important, job gets 8 bullet points.
- Your next job also gets 8 bullet points.
- Your next two jobs get 4 bullet points each.
- Everything else - all of your past jobs together, even if they were your favorite, most nostalgic, most enjoyable times in your life -- get just ten bullet points **total**. Nobody is hiring you today for the job you had a decade ago.

It's important to note that this distribution is across each job or title, not company. So if you've been at the same shop for 20 years, you should be splitting up your 30 bullet points across the different job levels and titles you've had.

The basic structure of a marketing bullet point is a **success verb** and a **number**.

Every bullet point in your success resume must include a **number** expressed in dollars, percentages, or a simple, “plain old”, straight-up number.

Importantly, every bullet point in your resume must include a **success verb**. These are verbs that show success - something got better. So verbs such as increased, decreased, improved, reduced, etc., are what we are looking for. Explicitly forbidden are static verbs -- “managed”, “my responsibilities included”, “I was hired to...”, etc. Verbs that merely describe a fact of the matter rather than show you in a heroic light.

Rather than leave you wondering what success verbs might be, I'll give you a precise list of 24 verbs you can use on your resume. The simplest way to do your resume right is to use these, **and only these, verbs**.

This seems boring, but it really doesn't matter. Unless you are applying to be a thesaurus writer, **nobody cares how clever your success verbs are**. The millions of hours lost each year to professionals like you looking up synonyms for “improved” is a complete waste of time -- none of the three layers of reviewers are grading you for verbal facility.

List of Success Verbs

Achieved
Added
Awarded
Changed
Contributed
Decreased
Delivered
Eliminated
Exceeded
Expanded
Gained
Generated
Grew
Improved
Increased
Introduced
Maximized
Minimized
Optimized
Produced
Reduced
Saved
Sold

So your typical 8-bullet point job achievements on your 8-minute resume will read like this:

- Increased x by %
- Decreased x by %
- Improved x by \$
- Reduced x by \$
- Introduced new x that led to # more....
- Eliminated old x that led to # less...
- Successfully added # new x....
- Achieved the removal of # new x...

“x” can be profits, costs, clients, vendors, products, practice areas, strategies, risk, volatility, etc.

And, of course, it's important to have a number, dollar, or percentage increase / decrease

mentioned in each bullet point. You'll be surprised at how many you can write using this template, and how this process jogs your memory for all the great stuff you've done...

- Increased new customer visits by 17% without increasing ad budget.
- Decreased AWS bill by 42% through improved architecture (vs. 19% industry average).
- Improved revenue per SaaS client by \$4,250 through consultative sales training.
- Reduced cost-per-hire by \$7,010 through employee referral program
- Introduced 2 new products that led to 2,500,000 increase in MAUs.
- Eliminated old systems that led to a 75 FTE reduction in offshore headcount.
- Successfully added 3 productive warehouses to our nationwide network.
- Achieved the removal of 5,000 external firm billable hours per year by reorganizing internal staffing.

But, you might say, I brought amazing non-quantified value to the organization! I introduced Agile Development, led a huge bond offering, brought innovative logistics strategies to bear, or reorganized our selling methodology.

Yes. I agree those are impressive and important achievements.

But they are only impressive and important to the extent they are quantifiable. New methodologies, exhibiting leadership, or bringing innovation to a company are interesting to your bosses' bosses only to the extent they improve, **quantifiably**, the outcome of the company -- more users, more revenue, faster turnaround, higher client satisfaction.

Ideally, every bullet point has a number. I'd strongly prefer if you had 100% of your bullets "quantified". During the past year, I've seen a lot of Members struggle with this advice, so let's say this about numbers in bullet points:

- 100% is **ideal**
- 66% is pretty good
- 50% of your bullets quantified is **minimum**

Most everybody is able to achieve at least half of their bullet points mentioned a number or a percentage or a dollar sign, so I'm pretty confident you can get there.

Overall, the above outline is remarkably simple because the job search process, despite all the anxiety and confusion, is remarkably simple. You want to do work similar to the work you've done before but at a new place and a new level. To do so, you need to explain to new people what can give them confidence that you will be able to contribute to the new team. The easiest way to do that is to share numerical data that show you have contributed in the past and can, therefore, contribute in the future.

Your audience

Your resume is a marketing document that needs to get past three people to get you your interview:

A **junior resume** screener who is comparing your resume to a list of skills, titles, or companies that he or she is given by the recruiter. Overly clever resumes or cutesy positioning can really kill you with this person, because they don't understand the nod and the wink that comes with writing "Chief Bottle Washer" when you really mean "Co-Founder". For these reviewers, the choice of phrases in the professional summary is especially important.

A **recruiter**, whether internal or external, who, on average, will give your resume 6 seconds first screening. And then, later, another 2 - 3 minutes to make sure you're worth presenting to the client or hiring manager. By giving them easy-to-digest numbers they can share with the client or hiring manager, you make it much easier to present you, rather than a different candidate, for the interview.

The **hiring manager** who will be interested in finding out “what can this person do for me and my team in the next year or two.” This person will review your resume in more detail. She will be looking for indications that you have previously solved the types of problems this job will have to deal with.

Your goal is to **quantifiably prove** that you can. Numbers are the most persuasive friends you have in this situation. Every bullet point spent on describing historical circumstances, promotions, or scope of responsibilities is wasted and lost on a hiring manager. They already know what the role **does**... they need to know if you'll be any good at it!

Eight minutes to a better resume

By following the above, you'll be in a much, much better place than with other methods of do-it-yourself resumes. Of course, there's a lot of nuance that 8 minutes can't get you, but the above is $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way there.

So after you get your [resume reviewed](#) by our free tool in 35 seconds or less, you can [build your resume](#) with our free builder, and you'll be on your way to having a powerful new resume with this 8-minute resume guide!

And with that, have a great week, folks!

I'm rooting for you!



Marc Cenedella, Founder

p.s. I still get people telling me they love this story: [‘Facebook turned me down’—the job rejection letter that turned into a \\$4 billion check](#)



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