
Manufacturing Resume Writing Tips

While the manufacturing sector is experiencing slower-than-average job growth, the US Department of Labor reports that more than 60 percent of jobs are found in manufacturing, and earnings are higher than the national average.

Hank Cox, VP of media relations for the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the largest industrial trade association, says the organization is responding to a growing cry from manufacturers that they cannot find qualified workers.

"It's not your father's factory floor anymore," Cox says. "The US market is becoming much more high tech to compete in the global manufacturing marketplace. Employers are looking for higher-grade workers, and there has not been any defined career path towards this goal."

What can you do to make your resume stand out in the manufacturing field? Follow this advice:

Use the Right Strategy for Your Career Level

Charlie Wilgus, managing partner at recruitment firm Lucas Group, specializes in manufacturing and supply-chain workers and encourages manufacturing professionals to consider their level of experience when creating a resume.

- **Junior Candidates:** Highlight skills learned in engineering school or internships related to your job objective. The resume should stay close to one page.
- **Experienced Candidates:** Display a solid progression of accomplishments and responsibility, with your most recent experience being the most detailed part of the resume. If you are pursuing a management position, also show a track record of leadership accomplishments. Try to keep this resume to two pages.

Get to the Point

Jeff Heyden, who recruits for manufacturing organizations as a VP at search firm To werHunter, sees about 250 resumes a day. He says most of these resumes are from unqualified applicants. "Resumes should work like an 'elevator story' -- you should briefly summarize your experience and accomplishments so I can understand why you are a unique candidate," he says.

An effective way to focus your resume is by adding a qualifications summary, which opens your resume with a clear career goal and highlights your strongest credentials.

Focus on Accomplishments

Whether manufacturers are looking for bench workers or senior executives, they want workers who can help increase productivity. "Accomplishments should be added to the resume to show a track record of top performance," Heyden explains. "Tell me a story about how your career progressed and how you contributed to your previous employers' manufacturing operations."

Wilgus also likes to see accomplishments. "Anytime that a manufacturing candidate can list numbers, percentages, product lines and reductions they made in waste, time and cost of material in a production process -- these are all quick-read items that can bring the talents and accomplishments of an individual to the surface," he says.

Show Off Your Skills

Cox says a shortage of skilled workers is a common complaint by manufacturers, so include job-related skills on your resume. You can weave them into your qualifications summary or your Monster resume's Skills section.

Another benefit of including skills is that many are industry keywords employers use to find suitable applicants. "Most candidates don't realize that recruiters and hiring authorities use specific keyword-searching techniques to target qualified resumes for a particular job opening," Wilgus says. "Manufacturing candidates of all levels should make sure they have specific industry-related terms embedded somewhere in the resume."

Heyden adds that each manufacturing niche has its own set of buzzwords, so it's a good idea to find out which terms hiring managers are searching on and then incorporate the keywords that match your skill set into your resume.

According to Wilgus, manufacturing keyword examples include: lean manufacturing, Six Sigma, continuous improvement, kaizen, manufacturing, engineering, process, quality and operations.

Get Qualified

The US Department of Labor predicts a skilled-labor shortage of 8 million workers by 2010, and NAM fears the manufacturing industry will suffer due to lack of interest in manufacturing careers. Cox says NAM's Manufacturing Skill Standards Council has just rolled out a production technician certification program -- a first-of-its-kind standard that will help employers identify skilled workers.

Whether you explore this certification or expand your qualifications through specific trade certifications (e.g., Certified Pipe Welder, Certified Quality Engineer), on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships, membership in professional organizations or practical work experience, it's your job to keep your skills -- and your resume -- refreshed.