Checkpoint 1

Writing a winning resume

Overview

Your resume is a record of your education and career. Its goal is to get the other party interested enough to start a conversation with you about potentially working with them. Once you've been able to get the conversation going (e.g. have the interview), it's up to you to speak intelligently about the things you've done, and the resume becomes less important.

As a career changer, especially one with a non-traditional background, you will almost certainly be better in person than on paper. It's okay that you don't have the 3+ years of work experience that jobs ask for; your resume can still tell an effective story of what you do have to offer vs. what you don't. This module will teach you how to have your resume stand out from the herd, but keep in mind that the most powerful tools at your disposal are forging 1-on-1 connections and not blindly dropping your resume into every job opening.

In this lesson, we'll walk through each of the sections of a typical resume and how you can leverage your strengths when constructing them.

Resumes are important but remember that at the end of the day, it's still an odds game.

Objectives

At the end of this checkpoint, you will:

- Understand the components of an effective resume.

- Create the first draft of your resume.

- Submit your resume to our profile developer.

The Resume

The resume is NOT the catch-all repository of your whole life. Instead, think of it as a focused marketing tool designed to get the employer interested in chatting with you to find out more. You want to prove that you're technically capable of handling whatever they're going to throw at you. So think like a geek and only include what builds that kind of story.

Your goals should be to:

1. Show **experience** — Leverage what you've done before, whether that's job experience or projects. The best signal that you can do a job is to show that you've done either it or a very similar job to it before.

2. Demonstrate **capability** — Show that you've built complex projects or conquered new technologies before.

3. Display **social proof** — Prove that other people have hired you or selected you before. Were you a TA at school? Are you a leader in anything? Have you won anything? This proves that you've made the cut before and makes you more desirable.

Know Your Audience

When writing your resume, consider your reader and know who you're talking to. In the case of hiring, the reader is going to be the hiring manager." Remember the perspective of the hiring manager. Whether they are a recruiter, HR, or a director-level individual — that person wants to hire someone who is highly capable, able to get stuff done, and adds value ASAP.

The hiring manager will determine if you meet the criteria in a matter of seconds based on where you've been educated, who's hired you before, and if you have any interesting projects that stand out. Recruiters rapidly build a story of who you are based on your resume — in some cases, it only takes them 5 seconds to determine if they want to proceed. If you're lucky, that snapshot will seem interesting enough for the decision maker to actually read the resume more thoroughly to determine what you bring to the table so they can invite you to the interview process.

Overall Layout

Make sure your resume is only a single page. If you have relevant work experience (e.g. another development job, internship, etc.) it should go

first. Otherwise, your projects are your biggest asset. Make sure that 1) you have a 1-2 line summary that gives the reader a heads up on what they're about to read and 2) that the most important parts are listed first because the lower stuff rarely gets seen until you're already in the interview.

When you're building your resume, make sure the reader's eye jumps to the important bits first. It's better to have a resume with good whitespace and an open feel to it than one that's crammed with text.

Format

- For **web development**, check out this template. sZSDqo5GozPiOP7iBFpGOAJR6tkFJM8?ogsrc=32) as well as an HTML version that can be replicated.

Layout Tips

- Link to any applicable links (e.g., Github profile, your personal webpage, your blog, and your LinkedIn profile)

- If you have other forms of social proof (e.g. lots of Twitter followers), link to those as well.

- Include your physical as well as virtual contact information.

- If you're totally starting from scratch, check out Resume Beacon to convert your LinkedIn profile to a resume and to check out their templates.

Attention Grabbers

Want your resume to have a decent design touch without doing much of anything? Just change the font color of headings something other than black. That immediately helps the eye of the reader jump to the headlines.

Skills Section

List your skills. You can indicate which ones you're still learning, but keep it simple. Make sure to use the proper case.

Here's an example of how to categorize those skills:

Web Development

Front-End: JavaScript, React, Redux, Enzyme, jQuery, HTML5, CSS3
Back-end: Node.js, MongoDB, Mocha & Chai, Passport, REST APIs 3
Dev Tools: Git, GitHub, Chrome Dev Tools, Heroku, Travis CI

Projects Section

Your projects are your most important asset, so feature them well. In your resume, that means linking directly to the project on GitHub and highlighting the top level technologies it demonstrates.

Include a brief explanation of the project along with an overview of the most challenging problems you faced and how you solved them. You should be able to come up with 2-3 of these problems with just a bit of thought. Basically, what made you say, "How do I solve that"?

Projects Section Tips

If applicable, be sure to:

- Link to each project's individual GitHub page or page on your portfolio.

- Include a strong README or case study breakdown that describes that project well.

- Link directly to a live demo if that demo is cool/useful.

Experience Section

The point of the Experience section is two-fold. The first is to show that you've had relevant experience and, the second is to show that other people have actually liked you enough to hire you. You'll want to include each of your past positions which are relevant in some way, so avoid adding that burger-flipping job.

The initial resume reviewer (usually a recruiter or HR) will usually just look at the company name, job title, and dates. The hiring manager will be more interested in the meat of your job description for each position.

The key to a good experience section is to frame the results properly. They don't know anything about what you did at your last job, so it's entirely up to you to tell them. The worst way to do this is to list your responsibilities, e.g. "And I did this... and I did that... and I did that...". Hiring managers want to know that you can get useful tasks done. Frame what you've done in the context of why it's useful.

Focus on listing your ACCOMPLISHMENTS, not your RESPONSIBILITIES

Because you're probably coming from a different career, you will need to educate the reader on why what you did was impressive (even if it was just a normal part of your job). The best way to do this is by

quantifying the outcome of everything possible. The metrics don't need to be objectively meaningful, but they should allow the reader to say "oh, that sounds like it was effective/useful" instead of "great, another 'responsible for' with no context...".

Also, focus on any technical or leadership aspects of your roles. You're trying to present an image of a highly technical and capable individual here, not a jack-of-all-trades.

Experience Section Tips

- Use Impressive Action Verbs.The "leader voice" is much better than the "passive participant voice". For instance "Led the quarterly review process..." is *far* preferred to "Participated in the quarterly review process..." because the second option makes you sound like just another drone. Even if you haven't actually "led" something, re-read what you've written and make sure it doesn't sound passive.

- Avoid Gaps in History. Don't leave large chunks of empty time if you can avoid it — that invites questions about whether you were at home eating Cheetos and watching cartoons.

- Be picky about relevant jobs. Don't feel pressured to include every job you've ever had. Relevant and short is key.

- Be picky about descriptions on jobs. By the same token, don't feel pressured to include every job responsibility you had. We believe that you did lots of cool things, but stick to what hiring managers are actually going to care about — technical skills.

Education Section

Your formal education (if you have it) is still important so don't leave that out. Some employers will want to see a GPA, and it's best to include it if you had good grades. Include anything that indicates excellence like winning prizes, honor roll, and graduation honors. Technical degrees and minors are more valuable than non-technical ones, so emphasize those where possible. *For information on including Thinkful, see below.*

Education Section Tips

- If you didn't complete school, it's probably best to include the school and the reason for leaving (if it makes sense), e.g. "left to pursue web development." This will depend somewhat on which geographic area and sector you're applying into — the tech industry is quite accepting of non-traditional education, whereas other areas lag behind.

How to Include Thinkful

On your resume, the best strategy is to include Thinkful/Bloc in your projects and/or experience section (as an apprenticeship). This will depend on what else is on your resume though. If you have plenty of technical experience, you can place less emphasis on Thinkful/Bloc. If it is your strongest technical piece, you should include it under Experience to show your career readiness.

THINKFUL Graduation Date **Course Name** (Full Stack Flex / Engineering Immersion)

- Learned industry best practices and practical software development standards with a focus on HTML5, CSS3, JavaScript, jQuery, Node.js, React, Redux, and algorithms & data structures.

- Created and deployed mobile-first applications while learning new languages and frameworks by collaborating several hours every week with a senior web developer.

Additional Tips & Resources

- 43 Resume Tips That Will Help You Get Hired

- An opinionated guide to writing developer resumes in 2017

- 4 Simple Resume Changes That'll Get the Hiring Manager's Attention

- How to Make Sure Your Resume Is as Current as Your Skills

- 10 tips for writing a job-winning developer resume

- How to avoid getting your front-end developer resume thrown out

Assignment

Submit a Google Doc link to your resume draft below. Be sure that it's not a PDF and there is edit access.

From here your resume will be submitted to one of our professional profile developers who will work with you through two rounds of edits. Please ensure that you complete this as soon as possible as this is a requirement for graduation.

Checkpoint

Submit your ideas or a link to your work here and use it as a conversation starter during your next mentor session.

This checkpoint will not be graded, but is still required.

Share your ideas here...

bold _italic_ `code` > quote - bullet list

Outline

Preview

Submit Your Work

Report a typo or other issue

Next checkpoint

Go to Overview

Outline