



# Book Top Notch Executive Resumes

## Creating Flawless Resumes for Managers, Executives, and CEOs

Katharine Hansen  
Career Press, 2008  
Listen now

- play
- pause

00:00  
00:00

---

## Recommendation

The most essential component of any job search is, and has always been, the résumé. In this book, résumé specialist Katharine Hansen covers the basics and intricacies of résumé writing for candidates seeking executive positions. She explains, with thoroughness and an up-to-date sensibility, if not originality, that today’s executive résumé must be more than a listing of positions and responsibilities. It must detail the candidate’s challenges and accomplishments while defining his or her “unique value proposition” and creating a personal brand. Hansen explains how to do this and offers numerous examples, samples and case studies. She describes how to create a portfolio of marketing tools in addition to your résumé. *BooksInShort* recommends this thorough, comprehensive reference as a valuable resource for anyone seeking an executive position, right up to the C-level.

## Take-Aways

- Your résumé must highlight your accomplishments and define your brand.
- Design your résumé so it differentiates you from your competition.
- Cover the elements in the acronym “FABUKA”: “focus, accomplishments, branding, uniqueness, keywords and appearance.”
- Describe your specific achievements, emphasizing and quantifying your results.
- Keywords allow recruiters and employers to find your résumé using an “Application Tracking System.”
- Your résumé should be organized, thoroughly proofed and easy to read.
- Your brand portrays who you are, how well you do your job and why you are a great candidate.
- Your résumé is one of several tools in your search for an executive position.
- Always include a cover letter that highlights important areas in your résumé. Use it to clarify such items as an employment gap.
- Never put false information on your résumé.

## Summary

### The New Résumé

A traditional résumé just doesn’t stand out in today’s competitive environment, particularly at the executive level. An evolved, technology-driven résumé emphasizes accomplishments, includes keywords for easy electronic sorting and defines the job candidate’s brand. A management-level résumé must:

- Introduce you as an appropriate candidate for the status and rank of an executive.

- Instantly demonstrate your superiority over your competition.
- Define your brand by offering your “unique value proposition” and estimating your potential employer’s return on investment (ROI).
- Explain how your abilities align with the company’s mission and satisfy its “specific, compelling business need.”
- Present your achievements in a way that explains your “strategic vision,” “industry insights” and potential future contribution to the employer’s organization.

“For the foreseeable future...the résumé remains the linchpin of the job search, because it’s the piece that gets the ball rolling.”

When crafting your résumé, follow the acronym “FABUKA,” which stands for: “focus, accomplishments, branding, uniqueness, keywords and appearance.”

- **Focus** – Hiring managers often glance briefly at a résumé to ascertain quickly what the job seeker wants and offers. To survive this instant elimination round, focus your résumé by providing an easy-to-read headline and a list of key strengths. Center your name in capital letters on the top line. The second line should consist of your address and telephone numbers. Put your fax number and e-mail address on the third line. On the fourth line, use capital letters to list your top abilities. For example, “EXECUTIVE SALES LEADERSHIP \* MARKETING \* SOURCING \* START-UPS.”
- **Accomplishments** – Don’t enumerate your daily tasks or catalog your duties. State your specific achievements, quantifying the results in a bullet-point list. You might say: “Increased territory sales by 50% during previous year” or “Increased revenue by recruiting, training and organizing efficient contract staff capable of faster processing time that optimized sales representatives’ performance.”
- **Branding** – Today, an executive is a brand. Explain your brand in your résumé by expressing your individuality, reputation and essence. Use branding statements, such as, “Specialize in raising the bar, creating strategy, managing risk, and improving the quality and caliber of operations.” Or, “Uniquely positioned to deliver exceptional results in business-process management, solutions implementation and service delivery, combined with expert-level technical proficiencies in a Senior Project Management capacity.”
- **Uniqueness** – As a sales sheet, your résumé must differentiate you from the competition. Depict yourself as the best person for the job, so hiring you seems like the only logical solution. Research the employer, and tailor your résumé to the specific job and industry. Stress your uniqueness by including testimonials or by using an unusual format.
- **Keywords** – Many employers store and organize data about job candidates in an “Application Tracking System” (ATK). Put keywords in your résumé to make it easier for an employer to find. Add a “Keyword Summary” section to your résumé or sprinkle apt terms liberally throughout your résumé and cover letter. Go to TheLadders.com, an employment Web site, to find weekly reports of the top 10 keywords recruiters are using, such as “sales, CPA, controller, marketing, human resources, tax, SAP, software” and so on.
- **Appearance** – Your résumé should be neat and easy to read. It should look upscale. Use clear, clean fonts, short paragraphs, bullet points, and bold headlines and subheads. Make your design distinctive but not outrageous. Leave plenty of white space, avoiding clutter and an abundance of design elements. Proofread with care and pay attention to details. Put your name, contact data and page number at the top of each sheet.

## Résumé Writing: Assembling the Ingredients

Although the rules of résumé writing are fluid and ever changing, there are two principles which always hold true:

1. “Don’t lie on your résumé.”
2. Proofread carefully. Spell everything correctly. Don’t let sloppy typos hurt you.

“Today, résumés are keyword-driven and accomplishments-driven, especially at executive levels.”

The components of a résumé vary from person to person, but some elements are pretty standard. Always list your name and contact number at the top of the page, and include the following, if relevant:

### “Branding Statement” and “Objective Statement”

Place a branding statement near the top of your résumé. It describes who you are, how well you do your job and why you are a desirable candidate. It should build your reputation, showcase your talents and define the unique skills, and talents you offer potential employers. Don’t list character traits, like “diligent.” Focus on your achievements and the benefits you can bring to an employer. For example, one professional wrote:

“An unfocused résumé is a time-waster for the employer.”

“Organizational maverick who sets aggressive goals, takes decisive action and confronts issues directly in providing effective leadership to an innovative, entrepreneurial-driven organization while building, achieving and sustaining ROI and profits through a team of talented professionals committed to its vision, values and mission.”

“The executive résumé must focus on key strengths that position the candidate to meet a specific need.”

You may want to include an objective statement, although they are losing popularity. This statement clarifies how you would fill a particular job. A good objective statement is specific and concise. It explains exactly what job you seek and what you would do with it. For instance, your objective might be: “To provide top-level management and creative direction in developing” the employer’s agency. Or, “To propel the firm’s success to new levels using finely honed” sales techniques.

### “Profile, Qualifications Summary and Executive Summary”

This brief paragraph or bullet-point list covers your credentials and background. It focuses your résumé by emphasizing three or four solid, relevant qualifications, such as areas of expertise, advanced degrees, licenses or foreign language skills. For example, “Ph.D.-level leader, change agent and social activist who has developed a broad range of programs and procedures that yielded cost-effectiveness and maximum utilization of resources and accountability.”

## Professional Experience

Arrange this record of your career job-by-job, listing your former positions in order of their importance to the potential employer. The ideal listing shows “title/position, name of employer, city/state of employer” and “dates of employment,” for instance: “Development Manager, Epitome Inc., Hartland, MN, Jan. 1998 to March 2002.” Under each job noted, provide a bullet-point list of your accomplishments. Avoid passive-sounding verbs, such as “involved,” “assigned” or “received.” Verbs and phrases like “collaborated,” “created” or “played key role” are much stronger.

“The executive résumé must – with a future-oriented flavor – emphasize results, outcomes and career-defining performance indicators.”

The subsequent sections on your résumé might include: “Education and Professional Development, Licenses/Certifications, Professional Affiliations/Memberships, Languages and International Travel/Experience, Public Speaking/Presentations, Publications, Military Background” and “Volunteer and Community Service.” Some of these sections are optional, depending on your background and the type of job you seek.

“Craft persuasive, high-impact statements that sell your qualifications as the best candidate.”

The most popular résumé format follows a chronological timeframe. Recruiters and employers prefer this format. However, if you’re just entering the workforce, have gaps in your employment history or have worked in several fields, you may prefer to use a “functional” résumé format that is organized by your skills rather than by your employment history.

## Résumé Plus

Your résumé is just one of several tools you can use in your search for an executive position. Other “career-marketing communication tools,” or documents that help build your personal brand, include a “cover letter, biography, leadership profile, references, PowerPoint résumé, portfolio or Web portfolio and thank-you letter.”

“Ensure that your résumé is accomplishments-driven and features results.”

Although only two-thirds of employers read cover letters, they are still important. A cover letter demonstrates your communication skills and highlights areas that your résumé may not emphasize. Use it to address concerns potential employers may have about your résumé, such as a gap in the years you’ve been employed. Cover letters fall into three categories:

- **“Invited”** – these cover letters are the ones you write in response to posted job opportunities.
- **“Uninvited”** – these cover letters are similar to cold calls in sales, in that they are unsolicited.
- **“Referral”** – these letters are used to introduce yourself by mentioning a mutual contact. For example, “John Ross of Technology Unlimited suggested that you might have openings for systems analysts.”

“Recruiters play a far greater role in the job search for executives than for any other level of jobseeker.”

Cover letters are usually a single page with four or five paragraphs of content. Focus the first paragraph on who you are and why you are writing. Use the second paragraph to describe your qualifications. In the third paragraph, explain why you are the right person for the opening. The last paragraph is always a call to action. Ask for an interview and explain that you will follow up the letter with a call. Never send a résumé without a cover letter. If you are applying online, include the cover letter in the body of the e-mail. Make sure to spell-check and proofread it.

“Ideally, your résumé should be updated and ready to go at all times, even if you’re not actively seeking a new position.”

An executive biography delves into who you are beyond your work history. It gives you a place to expound on your soft skills and present your compelling personal story. A leadership profile, by contrast, spotlights your career highlights in a “challenge, action, results” format. It emphasizes your strong points as a leader and illustrates how you solved problems, for example:

- **“Challenge”** – “Small business, Alphonso Remodeling, Copley, OH, was a start-up in a competitive market.”
- **“Action”** – “As Partner, improved operations and developed productive relationships with clients, employees, suppliers and colleagues. Deployed strong conflict-prevention and resolution skills.”
- **“Result”** – “Increased annual sales from \$20,000 to \$1.2 million in five years. Earned International Remodeling Contractor’s Association Contractor of the Year Award 1989.”

“One of the first signs that you need a professional résumé writer is that your résumé simply does not seem to be working for you.”

Do not include your references with your résumé, but have a references document prepared to make available upon request. Be sure to include your references’ updated contact information.

## Résumé Don’ts

The main complaints that recruiters and hiring managers have about résumés include the following:

- Having spelling or grammatical errors.
- Using the pronoun “I” or writing in the third person.
- Listing incorrect contact information or omitting a phone number.
- Overusing industry jargon, acronyms and technical data.
- Writing in a self-congratulatory or arrogant tone.

- Listing a spotty or incomplete work history or one that emphasizes older jobs.
- Including information such as race, that might raise discrimination issues.
- Integrating too many design elements, like an abundance of different fonts.
- Saving your résumé with a generic file name, such as “Résumé.doc.” Instead, label it with your name and the date of your application, for example, “KHansenRésuméDec09.doc.”
- Recruiters also dislike résumés that are more than two pages long. Most executives can’t fit everything on one page, but if you exceed two pages, you should have something really important to convey.

## About the Author

**Katharine Hansen**, Ph.D., is the creative director at the job-search site, “Quintessential Careers.” She worked as a professional résumé writer for five years.

---