



# WRITING A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE EXECUTIVE RESUME

## A SELF-GUIDED WORKBOOK

*A How-To Guide with Step-by-Step Instructions, Templates and Samples*

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## Introduction

### CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

General George S. Patton would make this statement to new troops before they were committed to battle: “Advance and fire, and you’ll come out of this war alive. Dig in and wait, and you’re dead.” This advice was given to troops going into combat during World War II, but its applicability to today’s job hunter is amazing. The most successful job seekers continually attack the employment market, even though they understand there will be setbacks and defeats when least expected. These periodic reversals can be frustrating and shattering to the ego, but winners continually move forward and never quit until they achieve their final objective.

To achieve your final objective, you need effective weapons and tools. In executive career marketing, resumes and other marketing materials play a very important role.

### YOU NEED OUTSTANDING WRITTEN MARKETING MATERIALS

The resume is critical to your job search success. It must present an informative history of your skills, abilities, experience, accomplishments and education, and be more compelling than competitive competitors’ resumes. Your resume emphasizes what you think is important, and *if* the information you supply appears to match the employer’s needs, you *may* get an interview. Just remember, most jobs are won by candidates who *appear* to be the best qualified, rather than those who *are*, in fact, best qualified.

Needless to say, many questions are raised about the “ideal” resume. For example:

- How long should my resume be?
- What should I do if I have more than one target role or job objective?
- What is the best resume format?
- How should I organize my material given the format I select?
- Should my resume contain personal data and salary history?
- How much emphasis should be placed on education?
- What writing style is the most effective?
- Do I need to create a version for ATS or computer scanning?
- How important is a keyword summary?

These, and similar questions, are guaranteed to spark a lively discussion punctuated with considerable difference of opinion. In reality, there are “correct” answers to these questions. In other words, there is a right and wrong way to prepare a resume. There are items that should definitely be included in the resume, and there are things that are best left off. There are resume formats that have consistently proven more effective than others, and there are those that should be avoided at all costs.

# INTRODUCTION

You must understand, however, that the mere possession of outstanding written materials is no guarantee of success. In order to make your materials produce results, you must use them in a very skillful way. Because timing is so critical, and competition is so fierce, an element of luck will also play a role in your job-hunting activities. Your chance of reaching a company at the exact moment that they have an opening for your specific background is slim. In fact, it takes an average of 700 personal contacts to get one offer. None of this, however, means you can't be much more successful than the average job hunter. Indeed, a well-targeted high-impact resume, LinkedIn profile, cover letters and other materials will give you a tremendous competitive edge throughout your career search campaign.

## LEVERAGE OUR EXPERTISE

At ExecutiveResume.com, we have helped 1000+ clients advance their executive careers over the past 24+ years. We write ONLY executive-level resumes, which, as you will learn shortly, are fundamentally different from other professional resumes. We have condensed all of our expertise and know-how into this one-of-a-kind workbook, specially designed to help you write your own executive resume.

## HOW THIS WORKBOOK WILL HELP YOU

This workbook is designed to guide you in writing your own executive-level resume. But, as it turns out, writing is actually the final step in a sequence of developing or increasing your self-awareness on a number of topics. These topics range widely from discovering what your ideal job might be to defining your own unique brand and how you want to position yourself with a compelling value proposition for your targeted employer.

We recommend you take full advantage of all the tools and worksheets contained in this guide. However, we have learned over the years of working with many executive clients that some clients have an up-to-date higher degree of self-awareness while for others, it's been a while since they've reflected on their career needs, skills evolution, and professional progression.

Therefore, if you feel you possess high degree of self-awareness, feel free to skip the initial sections outlined below. However, please be careful in not skipping too much of the preparatory work. Otherwise, you will jump prematurely into writing your resume without the benefit of the critical insights generated from this important preparatory work. In that case, like most people writing their own resume, you are guaranteed to end up with just an average resume...certainly not the outcome you are ultimately seeking!

# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

This workbook is organized into several chapters, which aim to explain how to write a strong executive resume. This information is then augmented by the actual worksheets designed to guide you through key steps, uncover critical insights about yourself, your capabilities and your value-add for your targeted employers.

In **ATOPS Framework Overview** chapter, we share with you the basic elements of our proprietary career management system. Here, you will quickly get the sense of what might be involved in pursuing an effective executive job search and perhaps, spot some gaps in your approach that you may want to address as you write your resume.

In **Executive Resume Overview**, you will learn what makes a resume an “executive-level” resume and how to make it effective in generating the job search results. You will assess the role of content, structure and presentation in constructing an effective resume and understand the purpose and sequence of the most common resume sections.

The **Resume Writing Guidelines** gives you the best practices for actual writing while the **Frequently Asked Questions** section addresses the most common questions.

Finally, the **8 Steps To Writing Your Executive Resume** section is designed to guide you through the writing process step-by-step. These steps start with all the preparatory work and finish with publishing your resume in all necessary formats, which are critical for both networking-based and online-based job search strategies.

In addition to this workbook, you should have received some executive resume samples that you will be referring to throughout the writing process. Additionally, as part of the package, you should have also received some MS Word-based editable resume templates. If you are missing any of these materials, please email us at [info@executiveresume.com](mailto:info@executiveresume.com), so we can send them to you.

## LET'S GET STARTED

We are excited to guide you in writing your own quality executive resume. You will need to allocate some time and patience to this process. So, with that in mind, let's get started!

Your [ExecutiveResume.com](http://ExecutiveResume.com) Team

# ATOPS FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

## ATOPS Framework Overview

### OUR CAREER MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

We have encapsulated our 24 years of know-how of helping executives advance their careers into our proprietary ATOPS career marketing and management framework. This framework has been proven to yield results for thousands of our clients. It covers analysis, strategy, planning, and execution of the executive job search. It also addresses key aspects of landing a successful job offer as well as rapid and effective on-boarding in the new role.

Much of this framework is used in part to create highly effective executive resumes. So, let us briefly walk you through this framework, so you can get a holistic perspective of what is involved in pursuing an effective executive job search. Compare this with your current approach to perhaps spot some gaps that you may want to address as you write your resume.

	Job Postings	Career Targeting	Ads Application	Courtesy Discussions	Job Offer	
	History and Results	Search Strategies	Applicant Tracking Systems	Exploratory Meetings	Fuzzy Front End	
	Current Resume	Open Positions	6 Sec Eye Scan Heat Maps	Interviews	Communication Campaign	
	Social and Online	Hidden Positions	30 Sec Resume Skim	Follow-Ups	Culture Engagement	
STRATEGIC	<b>ANALYZE</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	<b>ORGANIZE</b>	<b>PURSUE</b>	<b>SUCCEED</b>	TACTICAL
	Ideal Position	Consulting	Search and Marketing Plan	Outbound Campaigns	Day One	
	Strengths	Personal Brand	Success Stories	Tracking and Reporting	Burning Imperative	
	Barriers	Recruiters	Resume and Collateral	Interview Evaluations	Key Milestones	
	Situational Analysis	Live Networking	Opportunity Discovery	Gatekeeper Techniques	Early Wins	
	Competitive Index	Online Networking	LinkedIn Profile	Stakeholder Influencing	ADEPT People	

It consists of the following 5 key elements.

### ANALYZE

The first element of the ATOPS framework is "Analyze". It focuses on a comprehensive assessment of your current situation, history of career accomplishments, current online presence, and inventory of your strengths, weaknesses, and targeted role. Much of this work is captured in the Career Analysis worksheet in the Appendix.

### TARGET

The second ATOPS element is "Target". Here you would typically work with your coach to determine the best ways to target your career search. You can explore this on your own using the discovery tools incorporated into this workbook.

# EXECUTIVE RESUME OVERVIEW

## Executive Resume Overview

### WHAT MAKES IT AN EXECUTIVE RESUME

There is no standard definition of “executive”. However, the classic line of demarcation between a professional and an executive appears to be the Director level role.

Let’s talk about you and propose a working definition to be used throughout this section.

If your current job title is Director or above (or seeking such a role), and your targeted salary is over \$150K, you are an executive by our industry’s most common definition.

Now that we’ve defined what “executive” means, what’s the difference between an executive level resume and simply a professional resume?

The defining characteristic of an executive resume is a powerful personal brand combined with an overwhelming evidence of significant and quantified business impact.

Executive resume is centered around a highly compelling brand and communicates a track record of specific quantified results, such as revenue and profit growth, cost savings, and business performance improvements. It also clearly communicates your most important core qualifications and leadership skills that are critical to success in an executive role.

### WHAT MAKES FOR AN EFFECTIVE EXECUTIVE RESUME

Your resume is a critical tool to help you land a new executive role. When pursuing a new career opportunity your resume's purpose is to get you noticed, rise above the crowd of other executive candidates, and secure an interview. To be considered a serious contender for your next position, your executive resume must be a results-driven sales tool that answers every employer's most basic questions: “Why should we consider hiring you? What's your track record?”

A truly effective executive resume is a response-generating sales tool that is compelling, distinctive in appearance, and consistent in finding its way to the top of the resume stack.

### ANATOMY OF AN EFFECTIVE EXECUTIVE RESUME

Over the years, we have reviewed and written thousands of executive resumes. We have encapsulated all this knowledge into our proprietary resume scoring system to rate and improve the effectiveness of executive resumes and compare them against other resumes. A resume can be viewed on 3 key dimensions: Content, Structure, and Presentation.

### RESUME CONTENT

Resume content – the value you convey – is the most critical element of your resume. When working on and evaluating content, here are the key components that make a high-impact executive-level resume:

# 8 STEPS TO WRITING YOUR EXECUTIVE RESUME

## 8 Steps To Writing Your Executive Resume

Now that you understand the recipe and the ingredients of an effective resume, let's start working on your resume. Please simply follow the following sequence of 8 proven steps to collect all the necessary information, prepare your initial resume draft, and finalize it for distribution and applying to jobs. As you start this process, allow yourself ample time.

1. Perform self-discovery
2. Self-assess and self-quantify
3. Crystalize your title/objective and executive summary
4. Craft your success stories
5. Complete the first resume draft
6. Revise and refine
7. Proofread
8. Publish in right formats

### STEP 1 - PERFORM SELF-DISCOVERY

In this first step, please use the **Appendix A – Self-Discovery Worksheet** to analyze your job preferences and expectations about your “ideal” job and work environment. There you will find the detailed instructions followed the actual worksheet to capture your ideas and really crystallize what your ideal role would be.

After completing this worksheet, please proceed to the next step below.

### STEP 2 - SELF-ASSESS AND SELF-QUANTIFY

In this next step, use the **Appendix B – Career Analysis Worksheet** to identify and document all the information that might become the content of your resume or will influence how you write your resume. In this worksheet, you will find the detailed set of instructions followed by the actual worksheet. When done well, this is the most eye-opening part of the process for most of our customers, especially if you have not written or updated your resume in a while.

After completing this worksheet, please proceed to the next step below.

### STEP 3 - CRYSTALIZE YOUR TITLE/OBJECTIVE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As an early part of the previous step, you will have already drafted your initial take on your title/objective and an executive summary. Now, with the benefit of completing the rest of that form, please go back and refine both – the title/objective statement and the executive summary paragraph. You are now fine-tuning the essence of your business brand and value proposition. Make sure it's compelling, unique and something that you can be passionate about when verbalizing it in your own words in a conversation or an interview.

# APPENDIX A – SELF-DISCOVERY WORKSHEET

## Appendix A – Self-Discovery Worksheet

### DEFINE YOUR IDEAL JOB

In this section, you will complete an analysis that will help you to identify your feelings and expectations about your “ideal” job and work environment. Some questions deal with personal growth and job satisfaction. Other questions help determine the gaps, if any, that exist between your present skill set and the skill set required by the position to which you aspire. Even if you know exactly what you want to do and where you want to do it, you should still consider doing this exercise anyway. The results of an honest self-assessment may surprise you. There are no right or wrong answers, although your initial reaction to a question is usually best. At the conclusion of the exercise, it may be helpful to discuss your answers with your spouse or a close friend. This does not mean you should accept another person's opinions, but a different outlook may provide you with additional insight. Just make sure you are absolutely honest and answer exactly how you feel

### THIS EXERCISE

This exercise is not a scientific or validated psychological test designed to determine your aptitude for a particular profession or occupation. It is simply a self-help exercise designed to help you determine the general characteristics of what you consider the “ideal” job. If you have serious questions or concerns about the direction of your career, or the type of environment in which you would prefer to work, you should seek the assistance of a career coach, licensed employment counselor or psychologist.

If you already have a clear picture of what your ideal job is, you can skip this step and proceed with your next writing step - [Self-assess and self-quantify](#).

### HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

Some people like to capture this type of info right here in the worksheet using software. Others prefer to jot answers and notes down with pen or pencil, so feel free to print out this worksheet and get started!

# APPENDIX A – SELF-DISCOVERY WORKSHEET

19. How have you grown in the past year? (Check the applicable answer.)

## RECENT GROWTH

	VERY MUCH	SOME	VERY LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	DETERIORATED
<b>In your ability to use your skills and knowledge</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>In self-understanding</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>In interpersonal relations</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>In job responsibility</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>In income</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>In your sense of personal worth</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>In the ability to set and achieve work objectives</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>In the ability to communicate</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>In status</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>In general maturity</b>	-	-	-	-	-

20. How would you rate your ability to accept and use new ideas or methods? (Do you look for new approaches or are you satisfied with the status quo? Why?)

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21. Are you reasonably familiar with the responsibilities of the position to which you aspire? (Are you fully aware of what you must know to hold such a position? What must you do – if anything – to prepare for such a position?)

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# APPENDIX B – CAREER ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

## Appendix B – Career Analysis Worksheet

### PREPARE KEY INFO BEFORE WRITING YOUR RESUME

In this worksheet you will document and analyze the information, which will serve as a foundation for writing your resume.

### THIS EXERCISE

No one knows you better than you! This Career Analysis worksheet has been proven to be highly effective in nailing down the most critical information about you, allowing you to craft a resume to generate best responses and results for you.

Please do your best to follow this worksheet step by step paying careful attention to the guidelines below as well as those placed throughout this worksheet. And most importantly, **trust the process!**

1. Use the Career Analysis worksheet below for your specific responses to our specific questions. For example, when answering the Education question, please provide your academic information.
2. Place your focus on the future and target your resume accordingly. To optimize your job-search opportunities, make sure you identify the strengths and successes that best support your future career objective.
3. Note the instructions and examples provided for each question. Where we ask you to refer to and follow the examples contained in this profile, it is important that you try to model your responses after these examples, both in terms of content and length. Avoid creating much longer responses than necessary and do not use idle, generic statements that fail to sell your unique value. Take care in how you phrase your responses.
4. Pay special attention to your quantified results. This is most critical! No other element of a resume has more impact on job-hunting success than specific and quantified accomplishments. As such, it is imperative that you put considerable thought and effort into showing prospective employers the results you are capable of delivering. Our experience shows that the number of interviews you are granted will tend to be in direct proportion to your ability to convey the results you have achieved through your career.

### HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

We recommend using your word processing software to fill out this worksheet. This may save you some time when you can cut and paste from this worksheet into your actual resume draft. Once you complete the Career Analysis worksheet below, please return back to the Step-by-Step section.

# APPENDIX B – CAREER ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

## KEY FUNCTIONAL STRENGTHS EXAMPLES:

- IT Infrastructure Design & Implementation
- Mergers, Acquisitions & Due Diligence
- Strategic & Operational Business Planning
- Vendor Analysis & OEM Relationships

More examples in Addendum

## Personal Brand Define your two or three most important personal qualities or strengths.

1	Define your strongest personal qualities (see senior-level executive examples below).	<b>TIPS:</b> Generalized statements are not given much credibility. For example, never say “Good communicator.” A more effective statement might be: “Confident communicator offering high-caliber presentation, negotiation, and closing skills on a global basis.”
2	Define your strongest personal qualities (see senior-level executive examples below).	
3	Define your strongest personal qualities (see senior-level executive examples below).	

## PERSONAL QUALITIES EXAMPLES:

1. A flexible decision maker skilled at synthesizing complex problems and devising effective solutions.
2. Able to make rapid assessments and quickly revise tactics to ensure project or program success.
3. Willing to undertake new challenges with the ability to develop unconventional or unique approaches.

More examples in Addendum

## Employment History Tell us about your professional experience.

### Current or Most Recent Position

Current or Last Company Name		<b>TIPS:</b> Remember one simple rule: The older the job, the less you should say about it. Your current position is more germane to your job-hunting success than your next oldest job, and so on. If you held more than one job title at the same company, treat them separately. If an employer has changed its corporate name, indicate its present name and former name, such as “CITGO (formerly Cities Service Corporation)”.
City	State	
Employment Dates		
Job Title		
Primary Responsibilities - Describe your primary responsibilities in five or six lines (see examples below). For additional older jobs, reduce to no more than four or five lines, and so on.		

# APPENDIX B – CAREER ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

**PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY EXAMPLES:**

1. Direct all global IT resource planning and operational initiatives for this \$3.4 billion, 15,000+ employee, and consumer products company. Oversee IT development/expansion issues, with a focus on IT organization design, voice/data communications, systems integration, emerging technologies, enterprise architectures, data center operations/security, and strategic alliances. Manage 12 direct and 474 indirect professionals at 24 locations in 18 countries with a \$67 million operating/capital budget. Report to the President/CEO.
  
2. Serve as CFO for this privately owned \$58 million consumer products manufacturing company, with accountability for budgeting, forecasting, treasury, internal controls, risk management, payroll, deferred contract accounting, operational planning, capital investment, reporting, IT and HR. Develop financial projections and recommendations to support executive decision-making. Lead the reviews of product segments for the senior executive staff to improve performance assessments and investment decisions.
  
3. Hold \$4.6 billion in P&L responsibility for this global defense-industry company with 17 manufacturing and 15 distribution/service facilities located in 24 countries. Lead the strategic planning process, formulate the corporate vision and strategic direction, initiate growth strategies, approve all major financial management and new product development initiatives, provide strategic guidance on operations, direct capital creation efforts, and approve capital projects valued up to \$1.3 billion annually. Represent the company to stockholders, Wall Street, international bankers and the media (print and network TV).

More examples in Addendum

Key Accomplishments - Identify five highly-numeric accomplishments (comprised of two or three lines each) for your current position; then four similar accomplishments for your next oldest position; then three accomplishments for the next oldest position, and so on.

**TIPS:**

1. Begin each statement with an action verb
2. Accomplishments must show the actions you initiated and the tangible quantified benefits. If the accomplishment was the result of a team effort, specify your role.
3. Use terminology appropriate to your area of expertise, and make sure you identify what each term means.
4. Use no more than two or three lines for each accomplishment and avoid idle claims.