



International Association of
WOMEN

6 TIPS FOR WRITING AN AMAZING RESUME AND COVER LETTER



Whether you're looking for your first job or applying for the CEO position of a Fortune 500 organization, you need to have a resume and cover letter that employers want to read.

Long gone are the days when a "one resume fits all" approach would work. Rather, it is vitally important that you have something that not only makes future employers fall over themselves to invite you for an interview but also well-written, indicative of your accomplishments to date, and aligned with your job search goals.

In a recent webinar, TORI-nominated, Top-Ranked, and 3X-Certified Master Resume Writer, Emily Kapit, provided several "must know" tips to help make resumes stand out to recruiters.

In this guide, we've gathered her most impactful tips and examples to help you write your own resume and cover letters. From the opening lines of your resume to the substance of your cover letter, we'll dig into what works and what doesn't as you market yourself to prospective employers.



WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR RESUME

While the idea of the one-page resume went out the door in the late 2000s, you shouldn't have to deliberately add information just to reach a second page. Nor should you be forced to prune your resume to keep it to one page. Include whatever is necessary to highlight your skills and expertise. Except for senior executives and academics, most applicants should avoid running to more than two pages.

Some elements are expected and should be included in every resume, while others will be conditional on the role to which you are applying and the nature of your experience.

Tip
1

Your resume should highlight the most important accomplishments from recent jobs and showcase career highlights that match the requirements of the job for which you are applying. Here are the key components of a successful resume:



Profile – A 5-to-7-line overview of your professional profile that summarizes years in the industry, background, and approach to the industry. How would you describe yourself if given a 30 second introduction?



Core competencies – This can be a bulleted or paragraph-style list outlining the key proficiencies and attributes you bring to the table.



Experience with a focus on achievements – This is the core of your resume, outlining your last 10-15 years of job experience with a list of accomplishments and their results. You may also consider including key highlights from previous jobs if they are particularly applicable.



Education – List the universities attended and degree(s) acquired. Additional details may be included if you are early in your career or if the industry in which you are applying puts emphasis on educational accomplishments.



Professional development – Outside of education and career positions, what you have done in terms of professional development? List any courses, certificates, or activities and the results of your time with them.



Volunteer activities – Whether industry related or not, volunteer work can be indicative of both ambition and the transferability of your skill set to diverse activities.



Additional leadership activities – Additional leadership activities both within and outside of your recent job roles will showcase your ability to step in and act when needed.



YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, FRONT AND CENTER

Resumes used to be much simpler. Geographic boundaries, the need for in-person interviews, and a focus on job duties made a resume simply a hit list of responsibilities. Today, your resume is the sell-sheet you share with every prospective hiring manager, VP, and executive you encounter – it's the marketing document of the brand called "you," and it needs to focus on what makes you unique.

The long list of responsibilities is out. In its place should be your most important accomplishments and their measurable impact.

Sure, you oversaw \$2M in advertising accounts, but what kind of ROI did you drive, and can you do it again? That's what a hiring manager really wants to know.

Tip
2

To effectively illustrate your expertise in a resume, it needs to highlight accomplishments front and center. There are several ways to do this, including:



Identifying and conveying transferable skills – Skills listed should be applicable to the job you are pursuing. If they are not immediately transferable, reposition them to be more relevant.



Use keywords that are relevant to the industry – To highlight how those skills are transferable, use industry-relevant keywords. This may require research if you are applying for jobs outside of your current line of business, but they'll make your resume stand out much more during the application process. Your resume should be 95% done by default, with the remaining 5% flexible for keyword integration and industry-specific targeting.



Focus on the challenges you faced – Make a list of specific challenges you faced in your recent jobs, the actions taken to address them, and the results (qualitative or quantitative) of your work.

As you create a list of accomplishments for each of your most recent 2–3 jobs, consider some of the following questions:

- ① Were recommendations you made adopted by the company?
- ① Did you manage a budget or a team?
- ① Did you train other employees?
- ① Were you promoted or given additional responsibilities in your previous roles?
- ① Did you improve a specific work process?
- ① Did you increase productivity or remove barriers for any processes?
- ① Did you save money or reduce the number of required resources on a project?

By answering these questions, you create a list of accomplishments that will be relevant to your job search.



RECENT EXPERIENCE & SELECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BROADVIEW UNIFORM RENTAL: Vice President: Multiple National Locations 2009–Present
Michigan-based uniform rental company with a broad domestic reach, \$50M in annual revenue, and focus on Hospitality, Health Care, Automotive, and Education industries. Oversee all aspects of Sales, Marketing & Strategic Planning, including national 200-person sales organization and several cross-functional teams across all enterprise divisions.

OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY: Created 10-Year Vision POV document to lead cross-functional teams with precise objectives and strategy. Successfully executed major aspects of plan within 5 years.

- Improved market share sales and marketing ROI via extensive analysis of current market position; identified opportunity for creating development model to successfully drive market and sales resource allocation.
- Launched multiple Lean Six Sigma projects throughout all divisions; determined cost-savings and incremental review opportunities, improving efficiency and productivity.

MARKETING & SALES INITIATIVES: Introduced new sales incentive structure to improve mix of business developed by sales team.

- Offered incentives-based on project details contributing to improved retention and 30% YOY new sales growth and 20% decrease in sales costs.
- Direct development of all marketing/sales materials, including brochures, training videos, tool kits, and flyers.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENT: Revamped and expanded sales-training program, resulting in enhanced sales volume and retention.

- Championed rebuilding of company website, introducing industry-first full catalog of imagery and logo mat/emblems drastically increasing traffic, engagement, and lead volume.
- Managed construction of new CRM database with customized reporting and managing tools, driving sales productivity, improving time management, and greatly securing intellectual property.

Rather than a list of duties, this sample resume shows three key areas in which the applicant was successful. She focuses on specific accomplishments, all supporting the short summary of her role there.

The first question is important because it speaks to the fundamental qualifications required for the job. But competence? That's the next step, and one that every hiring manager needs to see before investing in your brand (i.e., you!).

If you managed a team, what did that team accomplish in your time with them? If you managed client accounts, what was your retention rate, and did you generate any additional business?

By answering these questions preemptively, you provide the vital context needed by a potential employer to decide whether your brand is one they want to explore further.

CONNECT YOUR BRAND TO EXCELLENCE

When illustrating your accomplishments, ask yourself three simple questions.

Tip
3



What did you do?



How well did you do it?



What was the outcome of your efforts?

Accomplishments alone don't tell the story of your qualifications. When someone inevitably asks, "so what?", you should be prepared to answer.

To ensure your resume answers this question preemptively, there are several things you can do to tie your brand to excellence:



Ask yourself, "so what?" – Managing a team, overseeing a large project, or receiving multiple promotions is a sign that you were valued by your employer, but what does it really mean? Ask and practice answering the "so what?" question in advance of an interview.



Are your accomplishments quantifiable? – Your actions should be quantifiable, for example, with percentage increases in revenue, reductions in budget, or increases in retention from staff you trained.



Ask for feedback from colleagues – For previous roles, you can reach out to former co-workers for feedback on the accomplishments listed and to determine if they have additional input on what you provided. For your current position, speak with friends or family members with whom you regularly discuss your job.

Some of the questions you should ask include:



How did your actions improve effectiveness or efficiency?



Did you save time or money with your actions?



Did you receive any form of special recognition for what you did?



What challenges did you overcome for these accomplishments?



BUSINESS & FINANCE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

HOOK LAVENDER: FINANCE & BUSINESS INTERN: NEW YORK, NY (Wholesale Internship for UK-based swimwear company) **Summer 2015**

CHALLENGE: Utilize financial knowledge to identify opportunities for business expansion (new accounts & marketing success).

BUSINESS GROWTH: Secured new accounts for luxury clothing brand looking to expand in USA by conducting market research, initiating contact with buyers, and arranging face-to-face meetings. **Ideated business plan that doubled account numbers in Q3 & Q4 2015.**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT: Orchestrated all details and logistics involved in planning major promotional event in Miami. Successful trunk show resulted in **20+ new clients and significantly increased public exposure.**

MARKET RESEARCH, ANALYSIS & REPORTING: Directed market research and compiled data for executive board presentation regarding company expansion to NYC. Utilized data to craft plan focused on **increasing customer satisfaction, tracking retailer success,** as well as **penetrating additional accounts** domestically and abroad.



HILL CAPITAL: FINANCE INTERN: London, UK (Private Equity Internship for top-tier real estate investment/management firm) **Fall 2014**

CHALLENGE: Leverage research and analysis skills to assist with business growth and overall company strategy.

DATA REPORTING & STRATEGIC ANALYSIS: **Compiled comprehensive data** in order to explore expansion of student housing market into multiple European cities. **Conducted thorough research** on student populations and competitors and crafted detailed report. Created database of student housing sales and acquisitions; **presented all reports and findings to potential investors.**

BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT: Identified organizational need to **overhaul financial analytics strategy;** researched optimal tactics to ensure maximum productivity. **Discussed findings with C-Suite;** emphasized need for expanded insight and company flexibility.

This applicant not only provides specific examples of what she accomplished and the results of those accomplishments, she puts them in boldface to highlight their importance, including relevant keywords to describe those functions.

As an intern with limited time in both roles, it could be difficult to showcase the results of all her efforts. By showcasing those accomplishments and providing specific examples, such as ideation of a plan to double account numbers or managing logistics for a successful trunk show that generated 20+ new clients, she was able to convey her value in those roles.



PRESENTING MEASURABLE RESULTS

The average hiring manager looks at hundreds of resumes for every position being filled. The screening process can seem arbitrary at times, but it's a necessity for getting through that huge stack of resumes and finding the hidden gems.

You can rise to the top of that pile by providing not just the results of your efforts, but measurable, specific metrics that speak to your successes.

Numbers that speak to the direct impact of what you accomplished, placed alongside the scope of your responsibilities, will jump off the page and capture attention where words cannot.

Tip
4

Numbers may not be an inherent part of your job, but they can always be used to paint a more specific picture of what you have accomplished. Some specific ways you can make your resume bullets more quantifiable include:



Use a range for inexact estimates – If you are unsure of the exact number for something, use a range. This might apply to specific budget savings, the size of the team you worked with over several years, or ROI across several product categories.



Use frequency to quantify certain tasks – If you wrote blog posts for the company website, include the number of blog posts you wrote every week or month. Frequency can help quantify what your day-to-day job duties included.



Scale your efforts to show long term impact – Illustrate the scope of what you do by scaling up efforts over time. If you streamlined a process, calculate the cost savings over the course of a year. If you worked with a certain number of people every week, calculate the impact of that work over the course of a year.



Chrono-functional presentation – By combining a chronological resume listing work experience from the past 10-15 years with a functional approach that showcases expertise and accomplishments within those roles, you can better quantify your contributions at each position.

BUSINESS & FINANCE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

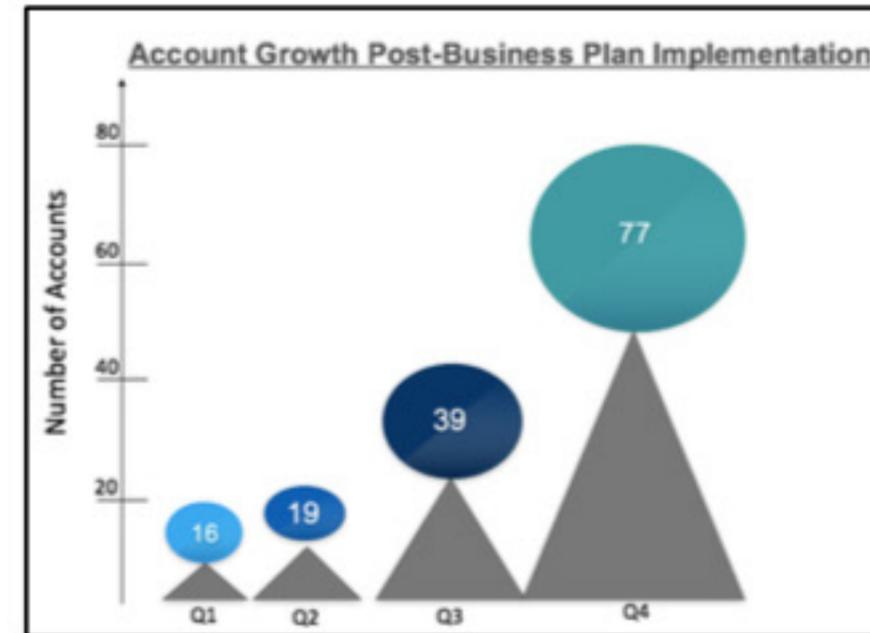
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BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT: Identified organizational need to **overhaul financial analytics strategy;** researched optimal tactics to ensure maximum productivity. **Discussed findings with C-Suite;** emphasized need for expanded insight and company flexibility.

While the examples included in the above resume are sufficiently specific, the applicant took an extra step by providing a graphic of the projected growth after implementation of her business plan ideas.



PRESENTATION

Produce a resume appropriate to your industry. It should be visually engaging, but stay within the confines of your prospective employer's expectations. A law firm or accounting firm will expect muted colors and clean, traditional layout, whereas a digital marketing agency or startup will be impressed by a more creative approach.

The resumes of 2017 are more eye-popping than the ones from 1987, but they still need to be appropriate to the position for which you are applying, and ideally reflective of your expertise in the field.

Tip
5

There are several areas where you should bring your focus before you can present a professional-quality resume to prospective employers. Spend the time needed to evaluate your resume and make sure it looks and feels the way hiring managers in your industry would expect. This includes:



Keep it visually engaging – Your resume should be attractive and eye-catching, within the context of the industry for which you are applying. Use color selectively to highlight your brand, separate sections, and bring particularly important details into focus.



Bold and shade key pieces of information – Use shading to highlight key proficiencies and attributes, and bold text to highlight job titles, areas of expertise, and key accomplishments.



Visualize data where necessary – Graphs and illustrated lists can help to accentuate key pieces of data in a data-heavy resume, especially for technical or ROI-driven roles.



Different sectors, different expectations – Expectations in each sector will be slightly different, and so too should your resume. Ask colleagues and connections in your field what is most often highlighted in a successful resume, and how you can emulate that in your own.



The 95/5 Rule – Many companies use digital systems to scan resumes for likely matches, so you need to include keywords relevant to the industry to make this cut. Aim for a resume that is 95% complete in advance of submission to any job. Then customize the other 5% based on the specific role, job description, and industry keywords. This applies to your cover letter as well.

SHAINA KRENZIS

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING LEADERSHIP

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VICE PRESIDENT ■ MARKETING & SALES STRATEGIST ■ EFFECTIVE TEAM LEADER

Top-Performing executive with 15+ years of progressive experience in strategic marketing and planning, project management, revenue optimization, and executive-level oversight. Highly-knowledgeable and intuitive strategist offering meticulous business expertise and tactics designed to increase revenue and reduce costs across all initiatives. Collaborate cross-functionally and internally to offer insight, improve productivity, drive unparalleled vision, and exceed expectations. Offer expertise in market segmentation projects, competitive analysis, and branding across diverse enterprise operations and venues. Truly excel in growing companies, strategically, effectively, and to ensure maximum long-term growth.

KEY PROFICIENCIES & ATTRIBUTES INCLUDE

Strategic Marketing & Planning ■ Leadership ■ Operations Oversight ■ Business Intelligence ■ Relationship Cultivation ■ Revenue Optimization ■ Strategic Decision-Making ■ Market Segmentation ■ Project Management ■ Budget Oversight ■ Media Relations ■ Executive & Team Collaboration ■ Program Development ■ Cross-Functional Collaboration ■ Product Marketing ■ Finance ■ Online Marketing ■ Mentorship & Motivation ■ MS Office Suite ■ Minitab ■ MapInfo Scan/US ■ PRIZM ■ SPSS

Shaina's resume is concise and direct, using color to emphasize core competencies before diving into a short profile summary and list of attributes. Visually, it showcases the most important information, while staying as succinct as possible before moving into specific roles and achievements.



BUILDING A STRONG COVER LETTER

Cover letters are an increasingly enigmatic part of the job search process. When do you need one? How detailed should it be? Does it need to be unique for every job you apply to?

Tip
6

The truth is that cover letters are a valuable resource that can demonstrate your ability to carefully read a job description and prepare for a new job application, while showcasing the most important points of your resume. It should be short, concise, and specific to the job for which you are applying, and it should have a purpose: to capture a perfect snapshot of your career and what you hope to accomplish in your next position.

A well-written cover letter should include these basics.



Consistent branding for your header – Match the header of your cover letter to your resume, and supplement with the date and addressee information, including name, title, company name, and location.



Outline your core competencies and interest – Make it clear in the first paragraph what you bring to the table, how many years you have been in the space, and what you feel you can offer to their organization.



Include key highlights from your accomplishments – Pull 3–5 of the most relevant and impactful achievements from your resume as short bullet points. Bold the titles, companies, and results in these sentences to call them to the reader's attention.



Length and depth – Your cover letter should be an introduction – the headline of your self-marketing presentation. Keep it relatively short (less than one page) and focus on the most relevant and important statements from your resume, focusing on achievement.

An e-note should be reserved for individuals with whom you have an existing relationship or have had a previous interaction. For a general application to a new role, you should use a cover letter.

Dear **[CONTACT NAME]**:

It is with a great deal of interest that I submit my resume for your **[Name of Position]** position. As a driven marketing professional, I possess immense abilities in brand management, program expansion, and integrated marketing strategies. With 10+ years of experience, I am confident that my background will make an immediate impact on your organization's success.

My ability to work as a team player, meet deadlines, and go the extra mile, together with my attention to detail, have contributed to my achievements in marketing. A few examples include:

- **As Marketing Director** at Harpur University, I launched 2 new Master's programs, **generating \$1M in new revenue and doubling student enrollment.**
- Also at Harpur, I **increased web traffic 300% and engagement metrics 100% while multiplying number of social media followers 10x.**
- **After a quick promotion to Strategic Planning Director** at A&E, I handled major accounts including Revlon, AT&T Wireless, SC Johnson, and Chevron, **bringing in \$1M+ of new business.**
- **During my tenure at NBC, I also spearheaded a successful sector diversification initiative** in the highly saturated telecom market that resulted in a **significantly higher increase in market share and brand performance.**

The above cover letter is succinct and direct. It starts with a short paragraph introducing the candidate and summarizing her qualifications. It then moves into a series of declarations and a bulleted list of examples curated from her resume. These examples are distilled into the most important elements of what she accomplished – showing results that will matter to the hiring manager. They should be general enough to match most roles you will apply for, but with some specific to the specific position.



BONUS: LINKEDIN TIPS

LinkedIn has fundamentally changed how many people search for jobs and how many recruiters find new employees. The ability to apply for jobs with the click of a button in LinkedIn, together with the active recruiting efforts of employers in the tool, changes the rules.

So, it's more important than ever that you have an all-star-caliber profile that perfectly reflects what you do and why you are the best at it. While your resume is the printed marketing collateral you use to teach people about what makes you special, LinkedIn is your digital billboard.

LinkedIn should play an important role in your job search. Whether you have an existing profile or are building one from scratch, here are several tips to help you get more from your efforts:



Set aside time to work on LinkedIn – Spend time working on your LinkedIn profile every week. LinkedIn is not just for active job seekers – it is for everyone. Employers will see recent LinkedIn activity after long dormancy as a sign of a new job search – so avoid this by remaining active.



Complement your resume, but do not duplicate it – LinkedIn is its own platform and should be optimized to meet the needs of its algorithm. For example, where your resume's profile is 500 or fewer characters, your LinkedIn profile should be 1,000 or more.



Build onto your profile with LinkedIn Building Blocks – Use the additional sections provided by LinkedIn to go beyond job duties. These include Publications, Awards, Organization, Projects, Skills, Contact Info, and Groups.



Address grammar and spelling issues – Start by revising your profile in a Word document, using the built-in grammar and spelling check tools. Then, consider a more advanced tool like Grammarly to check in more depth.



Build a larger network on LinkedIn – Connect with friends and professional acquaintances to start, and then build new connections through Group interactions. Save new contacts directly to LinkedIn when you receive business cards or emails as well.



Send regular updates – To really get the most out of LinkedIn, it needs to be updated on a regular basis. Post news articles, blog posts, or information about your current professional activities. Reach out to former colleagues and coworkers, and engage with prospective connections to keep your profile active and those lines of communication open.

Want to learn more about using LinkedIn like a pro to build a professional profile that recruiters will love? Download our eBook *7 Deadly LinkedIn Mistakes You Should Avoid*.

[Download Now](#)

Your resume is the ultimate marketing tool in your job search. Everyone will want to see it, and for most of your job applications, it will be the single deciding factor in whether you get a phone call and an in-person opportunity, or you get put in the “maybe later” pile.

Modern resumes have evolved to be leaner, more flexible, and driven by achievements and results. Yours should reflect these principles, allowing you to highlight your personal brand and what you can bring to a prospective employer.





International Association of
WOMEN

The International Association of Women (IAW) is a global in-person and online professional networking platform that provides nearly one million women with the forum, education, and services to thrive in an interconnected world.

IAW members have diverse backgrounds, beliefs, perspectives, and lifestyles, but with one common bond — their ability to succeed. Through over 100 local chapters and via in-person and virtual events, our community empowers each member to realize their dreams, acquire the connections and knowledge needed to rise, and helps them build better work-life integration and the confidence that is vital to lead.

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to learn more and join today