

[BlkWelcomeTitle]

Welcome to Your Resume Report

[BlkIntro]

Hello, **FldFirstName**.

Congratulations on taking the next step in making your resume work most effectively for you. When it comes to job seeking and career development, your resume is an indispensable tool.

A resume is not just a cookie cutter template that no one reads. It is often your only chance to make that crucial first impression. Even if you have amazing skills and experience, a well-written resume can mean the difference between getting an interview vs. falling to the bottom of the pile of applicants. A well-written resume will make you stand out above the rest.

[FldFirstName]

[BlkRRImageDesc]

A well-written resume is comprised of many key elements. Your Resume Report measures your resume in 11 different areas that contribute to its overall effectiveness: including language and syntax, accuracy and strategy.

[BlkRRImage]

[BlkReportPurpose]

Perhaps your resume is not currently at its full potential. Your feelings about your resume may fluctuate widely. At one point, you may feel proud of your resume and like it is an excellent representation of what you have to offer. At another time, you may feel self-conscious about your resume and may think that it needs a complete make over. Whether your resume just needs some fine tuning or a complete overhaul, your Resume Report will help you to:

- Assess and emphasize your resume strengths
- Identify and address your resume challenges
- Avoid resume mistakes
- Form a better resume strategy
- Maximize how you use your resume

Enjoy your free, personalized Resume Report. We hope it will help you maximize your resume's full potential to best serve your career development goals.

[BlkWelcomeQuote]

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe." - Anatole France

Language and Syntax

You may be the best candidate for the job, but if your resume is full of typos, too wordy, or just plain confusing, it is not going to land you an interview. Your Resume Report indicates that there is some room for improvement at the surface level of your resume. In other words, revisiting some lessons from English 101 could greatly impact the general impression your resume gives off.

Language and syntax are more than just the icing on the cake; they are what help you to communicate your strengths, detail your experience, and show who you really are to future employers. Even if you are not applying for a job as a professor of literature, you still need to demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly. Grammatical errors, typos, vague phrases, mixed tenses and verbosity are some examples of language pitfalls that you need to avoid so that your resume doesn't plummet to the bottom of the resume pile like a lead balloon. To shine like a silver-tongued star and rise to the top of the resume heap, as cliché as it might sound, it really is important to cross your t's and dot your i's. Here are some quick tips to help you to clean up the face of your resume:

- Use spell check every time you edit. If you have a resume, chances are you have a word processing application with a spell check function, so use it every time you make a change.
- Use grammar check, too. Many word processing applications have grammar check, so be sure and use it if you have it.
- Recruit an extra pair of eyes to review your resume. As important as spell and grammar check are, don't over-rely on them. It is not uncommon for something to pass the spell and grammar check but still be incorrect. This is when it is useful to ask a friend to take a fresh look and give you some honest feedback.
- Avoid vague phrases. "Taught classes to students" is not nearly as descriptive as, "Instructed 60 newly hired PeopleSoft professionals in Oracle and SAP every month." Your accomplishments should be specific or they will seem meaningless.
- Use action words. They make your resume come to life whereas passive verbs take the life right out of your resume. For example, it has more impact to say "I developed a content database." than "A content database was developed." Take credit for your own accomplishments.
- Keep the tense consistent. You can stick with past tense or present tense, but whichever method you choose, stick to it. Mixed tenses send a sloppy message.
- Stick to talking about yourself in the first person. Talking in the third person makes it seem like you are trying to distance yourself from your actions.
- Be concise. Most resumes are quickly scanned in the initial screening process, so if yours looks too wordy, it may end up in the reject pile.
- Be clear. Read your resume to yourself aloud—or a willing friend—and see if it sounds muddled or lucid. If you lose concentration or focus while reading, that may be a sign to clean things up.

Certainly substance is important, but employers will never see through to the substance if there is a total lack of style. Would you show up to an interview in scuffed shoes with your hair uncombed? Following these tips is the resume equivalent of shining your shoes and combing your hair and will help you to present yourself in the best possible light.

Accuracy

Accuracy in your resume is crucial. Any erroneous information can reflect poorly on you. Employers will often do background checks, and hiring managers develop a keen ability to spot gross elaborations. Don't cost yourself the interview or the job through an inaccurate resume. Your Resume Report indicates that there is some room for improvement in the accuracy of your resume. It will be worth your while to go back through your resume and verify that all the information is true and correct.

- Check dates of employment, training and education.
- Verify names and locations of employers, schools and training locations.
- Ensure all contact information provided is correct and complete.
- Job titles and descriptions listed should match those on record with former employers.
- Educational achievements listed must match those on file with schools and learning facilities.
- Ensure you never claim responsibility for accomplishments you did not actually do.
- Do not claim sole responsibility for contributions that were a team effort.
- Avoid exaggeration of numbers, achievements, responsibilities, status, role or reasons for leaving.

- Consider removing insignificant or irrelevant information rather than embellishing the truth.
- If you cannot remember exact information, contact former employers to get accurate data.
- All of the information on your resume must be true and correct to the best of your knowledge.

People often say that all resumes contain little white lies or elaborations. This is not carte blanche to produce a piece of fiction and pass it off as truth. Be honest and use integrity rather than falling into bad behavior to talk your way into a job. It may haunt you if you are hired using false information, and it could ultimately cost you the job. Even if you are as honest as they come, you must verify the accuracy of the information you provide. In your resume just as in life, honesty is the best policy.

Resume Elements

Resume elements are those essential pieces of information that should be present in every resume. While you can put your personal style into your resume in certain ways, you want to ensure all key data is present. Employers and recruiters have come to expect it, and it could reflect poorly on you if your resume seems incomplete.

Do you have all of the pieces to the resume puzzle? Your Resume Report indicates you have room for improvement in this area. There are key elements that should be present in every resume. Go back through your resume and check to see that it includes these essential elements:

- name,
- contact information (including email),
- education,
- certification,
- work experience,
- credentials,
- awards,
- objectives,
- summary.

In addition to ensuring essential information is there, also be careful to eliminate anything that does not belong on your resume.

- It's best not to include references or salary information unless it has been specifically requested, and even then, use your best judgment. Many times listing salary history can detract from your bargaining power in negotiating your salary, should you be offered the job.
- It is not necessary to say, "References available upon request." This is expected and goes without saying.
- You do not need to list reasons for leaving one job and going to another unless that information has been specifically requested by a potential employer.
- You do not need to list when you are available to start work unless that information has been specifically requested.
- Avoid listing too many hobbies or interests that are not relevant to the position. While one or two personal interests may give a sense of your character, if they do not pertain to the job, it can make an employer wonder if you understand the requirements of the position or take it seriously. It can also bury your key information behind fluff that doesn't have anything to do with the job.

Ultimately, keep your information clean, simple and to the point. Ensure all the essential elements are there as listed above, and eliminate any superfluous data that does not directly relate to the position or best market your skills and experience. You have a small space in which to sell yourself, so make every detail count.

Layout and Structure

Layout and structure refer to how your resume is organized. Your Resume Report indicates some room for improvement in this area. The two most common methods of organization are functional and chronological.

Functional vs. Chronological

In a functional resume, the emphasis is on the work performed and the skills needed to accomplish those tasks. It is useful especially for someone with a lot of changes in employment, who is just starting out with not much

experience, or who is changing careers.

The chronological resume is a more standard approach, listing employment history from the most recent job to previous jobs in descending order. This is a better approach for someone moving up the ranks in their field, who has worked with each employer for at least a year. It shows consistency, a logical trajectory and a solid strategy and ambition for development and growth in that career track.

Determine which of these methods best suits you and your career objectives.

Formatting

This is another layout element. Whether you decide to use a template so your resume follows a standard structure, or you do something original to stand out as unique, formatting can be a visual cue to make that first impression, stand out from the crowd and give the hiring manager a sense of your style.

Font

Font choice is another place you can affect the face of your resume. Something as simple as selecting Verdana, Times New Roman or Arial can have a noticeable impact on your resume's overall layout and structure. A word to the wise—try to avoid the stylized fonts. While they may be suit your fun, playful, artistic side, they can be extremely hard to read and may annoy rather than impress your potential employer. When in doubt, keep it simple and easy to read.

Length

This is a topic of great debate and some controversy. Does a resume really have to be one page long or it will be thrown in the reject pile? To put it in perspective, the rule of the one page resume was at its most popular during the time when resumes were mostly faxed, hand-delivered or sent with a stamp. Now that most job postings and resumes are posted and delivered electronically, page length is less of an issue. Most employers agree that they do not even think about the one page rule, or they believe it is outdated. Especially in the wake of the dot com crash where job changes became a normal part of life. While it is best to keep it as clean, concise and simple as possible, limiting it to one page may be impossible. Avoid delivering a manifesto, but try not to sweat the one page rule. Two to four pages is perfectly acceptable. One page may seem a little light in this day and age, unless you are just entering the workforce.

Bullets and Paragraphs

As we become more and more accustomed to doing our reading online, we have become bullet point aficionados. Some people are downright zealous in their emphatic insistence that bullet points are always essential. Use your best judgment. If you have something that feels like a list, use bullet points to spell it out so it is quick and easy to read. If you want to give a bit more context, stick with paragraphs so you can tell your story. A mixture of both is fine. Use what works best for you.

Emphasize Important Information

If you have a key accomplishment or skill set that employers will find extremely valuable or relevant to the job you are applying for, by all means, highlight it! If you bury it down in a list of work experience or past achievements, it may not be seen in the quick scan. Think of your resume as a cast of characters and story points and put the best ones up in bright lights.

Follow these tips to give your resume a face lift and take it to the next level. Test it out and see if you get a better response rate with your new and improved resume. Don't be afraid to test different versions out and seek feedback from your peers. Ask what sort of feel or tone people get upon first glance. Be sure it matches what you're going for. If you want to give a professional impression but your friends take a look and say it seems more creative and artistic, you may want to give it another try. Fine tune your resume so it can do the best possible job of selling and marketing you to potential employers.

Resume “Fix-Its”

How well do you deal with potential resume challenges? Things employers typically frown on include gaps in your work experience, returning to the workforce after some time off, not enough experience, no relevant experience, unpaid experience, lack of relevant coursework or limited education. Your Resume Report indicates you have room to improve in addressing these challenges in your resume. Here are some ways you can improve:

- Gaps in work experience. Try using a functional as opposed to chronological resume to highlight experience and minimize the gaps in employment.
- Lack of experience. In all its forms from never having been paid to do that particular task or job to not having done it very long or at all to just being curious about it but having no idea how to get started, lack of experience can be a real sticking point for employers. What can you do in your resume to circumnavigate this issue?
- Try volunteering to obtain experience. It may be easier to get started as a volunteer or unpaid intern than a paid employee with no experience.
- Take steps to learn what you are lacking. If you take classes, find a mentor, read books or even teach yourself in your spare time, you will make up for the knowledge you lack and become more proficient in the job you want to do. You show initiative as well as a commitment to become skilled in this area.
- Address the challenge head-on. If you are returning to the work force, you can broach the subject directly. Mention a sabbatical to explain a gap in employment, and briefly discuss your goals in returning to the workforce now. Do it briefly and avoid going into too much personal detail, but addressing it directly may give potential employers a sense of how direct and honest you are, and possibly alleviate any questions or concerns they may have had.
- Leave the education history out completely, or talk about plans to continue your education. Some people choose not to list education on their resume at all because they have not completed a college degree or gone past high school. Leaving education off the resume may be better than highlighting it if it is lacking. That said, if you are currently enrolled or planning to complete an educational goal, you can list that. If you have certification from individual courses you have taken, list those, especially if they are relevant to the job you are applying for.

If you follow these simple guidelines towards fixing your resume, you will greatly improve your overall impression and could enjoy a higher response rate. You have everything to gain so pop open the hood and start applying some elbow grease. Your resume will be purring like a kitten and performing like a champ in no time.

Descriptive Detail

Here's where you get into the nitty gritty of your skills and experience. Right after the job title, you list descriptive detail highlighting your responsibilities and contributions in that role. Your Resume Report indicates you could use a little work in this area, so try these easy steps to take your resume from good to great:

- Show your skills and experience. Do not just list job duties. List accomplishments.
- Make it relevant. Emphasize skills and experience that pertain to the job you're applying for.
- Think of your resume as a product brochure, but the product is you. Would you buy a product that said it managed workloads, spot checked work and ensured quality assurance on all levels? How about a product that was reported to reduce costs by 20% and increase revenue over 50% in just one year?
- Accomplishments are not always about the bottom line. Did you help to re-vamp a website? Form a new team or product line? Resolve an important customer satisfaction issue? Be sure they're on your resume.
- More is not necessarily better. Highlight key accomplishments but avoid going into too much detail on hobbies and outside interests. While this can add a bit of personality and levity to the dry resume reading process, it might not make you stand out in a way that will get you the interview.

Descriptive detail makes up the meat of your resume, so be sure it's well done. Stay on point, be concise and above all, highlight the information that pertains to the position you're applying for. You may be surprised at what a difference this simply practice can make in your resume response rate.

Resume as a Marketing Tool

Your resume is how you sell yourself and your work experience. Your resume should be more than your job description or life story. It should be a history of accomplishments, highlighting the skills and experience that set you apart from other job seekers and demonstrate the assets employers seek. Your Resume Report shows you have some work to do in this area. Here's where to start:

Focus on results. List quantifiable, measurable accomplishments that will be meaningful to potential employers and demonstrate your value and skills. Identify your contributions specifically. Did you learn a product or service and teach it to the rest of your team? Did you head up a new initiative and see it through from the early planning stages all the way through to execution? These are the sorts of measurable contributions that you should include in your resume. They help showcase your value and employers can start to get a picture of how you might benefit their organization, should they hire you. You are painting them a picture of how they would benefit from having you as part of their team, so be sure your resume tells that story.

Be sure you pass the first glance. Most resumes are initially scanned for ten to thirty seconds. That is all you get on the first pass, and if your resume does not stand out in that first scan, it may end up in the reject pile. For this reason, you need to sell yourself in the first quarter page of your resume. Your objective should be aligned with the objective of the job you are applying for. Your most recent work experience should follow, and it should list skills, accomplishments, duties and experiences that are closely related to the job you are applying for.

Use different versions. There can be several versions of your resume that are tailored to match the types of jobs you are attempting to land. You should always review a job description thoroughly and ensure your resume directly relates to the job requirements and description in some way. Do not lie, but be sure to list any relevant accomplishments or experience that would stand out to a potential employer and showcase how you are an excellent candidate for the position. For instance, you may have experience with Quality Assurance even though your job description was Project Manager. Some Project Management job postings may not list any requirements about QA, and so you might not feel the need to highlight that experience because you have a very small space with which to sell yourself. However, if you apply for another job that specifically lists a desire for QA experience, be sure and list it and specifically discuss any quantifiable QA accomplishments or contributions you made on the job.

Stay relevant. Relevancy is a sure fire way to sell yourself. Be as relevant as you can to the job you are applying for. Even copy down the job requirements, break them into bullet points, and attempt to address each one with your direct experience. Then re-write that so it is a list of your work experience, and you have a resume that is doing exactly what it should—selling you and your skills to potential employers. To survive the ten to thirty second scan, be sure to use concise, direct language that focuses on results and accomplishments. Use bulleted lists or short sentences where possible. Again, think of it as a brochure that is selling you and remember that most people do not want to read a lot of text. Keep it simple, be direct and focus on your accomplishments.

There are other ways to make your resume stand out.

Layout and structure. Using a well-designed and unique layout or font can set your resume apart from the rest, but again be sure it is easy to read. Do not go overboard with too many design elements unless you are a graphic designer and even then, let your portfolio speak for your work rather than trying to use your resume as a design example.

Portfolios. Portfolios of work are excellent ways to let your work speak for itself. Show employers what you have accomplished in past jobs. Portfolios are not only for graphic designers. Project Managers can showcase project plans and the outcome of projects they have managed from websites to application launches. If you have written any sort of business documents, you can provide examples of those in a portfolio. If you helped come up with a marketing campaign, you can include that. If you are a network administrator or IT manager, you can include photos of the facilities you managed, or include diagrams of the servers, networks and workstations that were under your care. Any record of work you have created or managed can potentially be included in your portfolio.

Video portfolios. There is also the video portfolio, which some argue is unnecessary or excessive while others find it the extra unique touch that will make an applicant stand out. The video portfolio can be a moving history of work presented in an entertaining way. There are free and nominally priced software applications to assist in creating video portfolios, and all you need to provide are graphic images or documents of your work samples. You can also use video footage of people talking about you as a sort of collage of references and testimonials, which can be

very compelling.

Be innovative yet professional. Be creative and innovative but be sure to keep it professional. There is an infamous video that went viral on the Web a while back of a student trying to break into Wall Street using a video resume, and he became a laughing stock rather than selling himself the way he intended. Part of his problem was focusing too much on hobbies and not enough on direct work experience and skills. The key to an effective video portfolio or resume is letting your work and references sell you as opposed to trying too hard to sell yourself.

Include transferable experience. Perhaps you do not possess directly relevant experience, but you may have transferable experience. This can be especially true for people trying to change careers, re-enter the job market or are new to the job market. These are skills and abilities not necessarily directly related to past job duties that may still apply to the job you are applying for. Maybe you have always been particularly skilled at math, taxes and balancing your checkbook. You may have completed a high level of math coursework and although you were never an accountant, you can list these experiences as transferable and relevant to a job that requires a strong skill set with numbers, such as a position as a sales account manager or bookkeeper. Think of all your skills and abilities beyond your work experience and list whatever may be relevant to the job you are applying for.

Following these tips should help you get your resume into great shape and potentially increase your response rate, so take the time to market your resume so it can do the best possible job in selling you. The investment of your time and attention are well worth it if the outcome is landing that dream job, or the next job that will be an improvement on your current situation.

Resume “Fit”

Resume “fit” refers to how well your resume fits the job you're applying for. Your Resume Report indicates you have some room for improvement in this area. Here are some ideas on how to make your resume a better fit for the jobs you're applying for:

Match the keywords in the job description. Keywords are sometimes listed at the bottom of job posts and are used to help search engines guide job seekers to the post. Conversely, your resume can contain keywords to help potential employers find you, should you decide to post your resume on some of the many job sites available. Many employers have a database that automatically scans for specific keywords and sorts the resumes based on those matches. If you do not match these keywords, your resume may not pass this initial screening process. Keywords are also the unique identifying words that stand out in a job post. What are the unique identifying words that stand out in a job description? What can you identify as the crucial elements the potential employer is seeking in an applicant? Identify these words and ensure your resume contains them as well. This is one way you can demonstrate that you are a good match for the position.

Customize your resume to directly address the job you are applying for. When potential employers scan resumes, they are looking for specific things. They want to see a match for the specific job duties and requirements they seek. Customizing your resume ensures that you specifically address the employer's requirements and increases your chances of passing their initial screening process. Identify the key requirements, keywords and experience the employer is seeking and address those in your resume. Be sure to list any relevant experience and skills that match what the employer is looking for. Use your own language and do not simply copy and paste the job description, but be sure to list any direct matches between your skills and experience and the employer's job requirements.

Match the level of the job. Be sure the resume you present is not demonstrating that you are over-qualified or under-qualified for the position. If you are trying to step back from a high pressure career as an account executive and move towards a lower pressure job, do not highlight your sales awards, fortune 500 client list and huge sales initiatives. List instead the relevant experience that applies directly to the job you are applying for. If you look at the job description and your resume and it feels mis-matched, step back and ask yourself what you can do to create a better match. It can also help to get an outside opinion, or imagine yourself as the employer and ask yourself if you might feel a disconnect between the resume you are presenting and the job you are applying for. Always try to make your resume be a good match for the job you are applying for.

Read between the lines. Sit back for a second and take a high-level view of the job posting. Interpret the job ad and try to understand what the employer is looking for both in what is stated and what might be implied. Do they use no-nonsense language and sound all business or is the tone of the ad more relaxed, casual and friendly? Try

to match their tone and think about the personality conveyed in the posting. If a company says they are a startup and are seeking people with initiative who are not afraid to jump in and roll up their sleeves, understand that this is an indication of a newer company that may not have a lot of structure or process in place, and they may want you to be able to work with little or no supervision and to be self-directed and an excellent problem solver. They may also want you to work non-standard hours or overtime, and they may all work well beyond any standard job description or title and expect the same from you. Show them that you are up for the challenge and list any past experience or accomplishment that may directly relate to this sort of environment. A correct interpretation of the job ad will help your resume shine above the rest, and could ultimately get you in the door for the interview.

Practice these tried and true methods to improve your resume fit and see how it helps your response rate. Ask a few friends to have a look at the old version and the new version with these tips applied and see what their reaction is. You may find your resume just went from “so-so” to “wow!”

Resume Use

Once you do the work to bring your resume up to the best possible level, you are ready to start putting it to good use. Your Resume Report shows that you could use some advice in this area.

You have perfected your resume in every way and it is ready to send out. Now what? First, be sure to send it out in the format that employers want. Some employers will specifically state, “Send resume attachments via email in MS Word or rich text format.” Others will state, “No attachments. Send resume in plain text in the body of the email only.” Others will require that you submit your resume through their online web form. Be sure and follow the employer’s guidelines explicitly whenever they are listed. This is your first chance to show that you can follow direction and pay attention to details. Due to the threat of computer viruses, many employers will not want to deal with attachments or will only want plain text. If you have spent a lot of time carefully selecting your fonts and constructing an elegant layout for your resume, it will all be for naught if there is a plain text requirement. However, it is best to follow the employer’s request than to insist upon using your elegantly formatted resume. Be sure and have a plain text version at the ready as many employers will require it. Do the best you can to keep your layout as close to your original vision as possible, but accept that employers who require plain text resumes care more about the content than the layout, and the playing field is even if everyone else is sending in plain text resumes, too. If an employer does not forbid all attachments but only says they will not accept resumes in Word format, a good work-around is to use .pdf. A free download of Adobe Acrobat can help you convert any Word or word processing document into a .pdf, which will retain your formatting while minimizing any threat of transmitting a virus. Many employers will accept resumes sent as .pdf attachments, but always check the job posting to be sure.

Besides applying to job postings, you may also want to post your resume in various job sites online. There are many to choose from and they usually involve filling out a few web forms in order to create an online version of your resume. Some will allow you to simply upload your resume from whatever word processing application you may have used to create it. Others will have you fill in several forms in order to generate your resume. You may also have options to make your resume public and viewable to all, to suppress your contact information or limit your resume to only be viewable to certain companies or invisible to others. There are countless options and sites available so start by searching for job seeking sites and investigate your options. Some say the shotgun approach works best—apply to anything and everything and that increases your chances for callbacks and interviews. Others prefer a sniper approach—carefully select a few top sites that may potentially yield the best results or are specifically well-matched to your requirements. Still others may fall somewhere in between or beyond that spectrum. Determine which method best suits your needs. Do your homework and research the various sites available. Ask around to friends and colleagues and check online reviews to see which job sites best match your job seeking requirements. Try a few out and see which ones work best for you.

Just how many jobs should you apply to? Anyone that is remotely interesting to you? Or only the ones that spark your interest? That is up to you. Again, some prefer the shotgun approach and others are more selective. If you are eager to work and need to get a job fast, you may want to apply to anything that appears interesting or at all relevant. If you have some resources to take your time and want to find the perfect match for yourself, be selective in your approach. Research the companies and jobs to the best of your ability and do all you can to get that initial callback. Either approach is effective but it is up to you to determine which method works best for you.

How you use your resume is just as important as what you put into it and how you present it. Brush up on resume use and see if it doesn’t help you get some more interviews, and maybe even a job offer or two.

“The Resume Package”

Beyond the resume, there are other pieces to the job seeking puzzle. The resume package describes the collective elements that come together in your search for a new job. Your Resume Report indicates you could use some help in this area. Follow these easy steps to polish your resume package:

The cover letter. Some may argue that the cover letter is obsolete or unnecessary, but if you review job posts you may notice many employers still specifically request one. If they do not, you may opt to skip it, but a cover letter can go the extra mile in telling the story that the resume cannot do alone. A cover letter is meant to introduce yourself to the employer and state your intentions in sending your resume to them. This is the place where you can give your resume, and you, some context. A cover letter is your chance to quickly and directly tell the employer why you are the best candidate for the position. In today's highly competitive job market, a cover letter could be the deciding factor in helping you get in the door.

Like your resume, you should have several versions of your cover letter that are customized to match the various jobs you apply to. They should directly address the employer's requirements and illustrate direct links between what the employer seeks and how you offer the exact skills and experience they are looking for. Be sure in your multiple versions of resumes and cover letters to never make the mistake of sending the wrong one. Listing the wrong company name or job title in your cover letter is a common mistake when sending out multiple versions to various jobs, so be careful that you have all the details correct before you send it out.

One thing you can do to stand out above the rest is to go the extra mile in researching the company you are applying to. Some job postings do not list the company name, but if they do, do your homework and visit the company's website. Read up on their mission, values, products and services, history, press releases, client list and any information you can find on them. Use this information in your cover letter if you can to show that you have an understanding of what they do and how you can help them. Ultimately, they want to hire someone who is going to support their vision and mission and it is up to you to show them how you will do that. Should you get a callback or interview, be sure and convey this information again. Do this every chance you get from your initial cover letter and resume throughout the interview process. Avoid taking a hard-sell approach, but do emphasize your commitment to adding value to the company. Demonstrate that you have done your homework and have a good grasp of what they are all about.

Follow up can be tricky. In the past, eager job candidates have shown up uninvited at the offices of potential employers. They have called and sent gifts and faxes and cards and letters. Some employers find this too over-the-top and even downright annoying. So how do you stand out above the rest without appearing eager to the point of annoyance? A brief follow-up email sent a few days after you send in your resume and cover letter can be a good approach. The email can simply state that you are following up after sending in your resume and would like to know where they are in the selection process. You can offer your contact information and ask that they inform you of their status, and you can indicate that if you do not hear back, you will follow up once again within a specified period of time ranging from a few more days to a week. Phone calls are generally frowned upon. Gifts and cards are pretty much universally considered a bit too much. Keep it simple and direct, and avoid being pushy or overly eager. Showing an interest while avoiding being demanding or needy is the best approach. Remain positive, courteous and friendly. Thank them for their time. Should you get an interview, you can send a follow up email to thank them for meeting with you. You can also use the thank you email to ask what the next steps are in the hiring process or when they think they will have made a decision, but you should try to address that during the interview. If they said they would get back to you on that during the interview, then it is acceptable to ask about it in your thank you email. Any contact beyond this is probably excessive, though sending in a printed resume and cover letter during the initial application process can help set you apart. Also be sure to ask your network of friends and colleagues if anyone has contacts at the company you are applying to. They may help to get your resume to the top of the callback pile, or even help you get in the door for an interview. Networking often plays a vital role in the job seeking process, so always remember to tap your connections for help in your job search.

Once you've made the effort to perfect your resume, you should go the final distance towards presenting the whole resume package, or else you might just sell yourself short. Cover letters, research and follow up are essential to ensuring you present yourself in the best possible light to potential employers. So do your homework, do your due diligence, and see what kind of return you get on your investment.

Resume Strategy

Resume strategy is how you focus on the bigger picture. How you use your resume and for what purpose. Your Resume Report indicates you have room for improvement in this area. Here are some essential practices that will improve your strategy.

Part of the strategy is using multiple versions of your resume tailored to different jobs, areas and industries. It is also the practice of scanning current openings to get a sense of the current job market. Are there more postings for certain jobs than others? Are there more postings on certain days or from certain companies? Are you seeing more entry level or high level job ads? What trends or patterns do you notice? Are you looking beyond one specific job title, sector or industry? Are you looking in more than one geographic location? Looking outside your usual search criteria may illuminate opportunities you had not previously considered. It may also deepen your understanding of the current job market. Having a good lay of the land is a helpful tool in resume strategy.

Another useful tool is the informational interview. This is the practice of interviewing one of your network contacts to obtain a better understanding of a specific job or career. Say you want to break into real estate but have no idea how to get started. You know someone who knows someone who is a real estate agent. You ask your friend to put you in touch with their friend and you ask if you can meet with them and ask them about their job. They agree, you schedule a time, make an outline of the questions you want to ask, and meet with the person for your interview. During the interview, you ask about how to break into real estate, what a typical day looks like, some of the challenges and benefits of working in that field, what sort of hours and salary range to expect and anything else you are curious about. You make notes and maybe at the end you ask if the person is willing to be your mentor or if they can recommend anyone to act as your mentor or advisor. This is a little-used but wildly effective tool for job seekers. It can be used for those attempting to get ahead in an existing career as well.

Targeting companies directly is another excellent strategy. Outlining key factors you are seeking in a job can be a good place to start identifying the types of companies you would like to work for. Do your research and find companies that match your requirements, and then start learning all you can about those companies. Not all jobs reach the job posting boards. Some are word-of-mouth and others are only posted on a company's website. If you identify the companies you want to work for and learn all you can about them, including any people in your network who may have connections within those companies, you can set yourself up in an ideal position for getting inside and potentially landing a job. If you really wanted to learn graphic design but could not afford the costs of courses, you might find a school that taught graphic design and offered courses free to its employees. Then you could find out if anyone in your network went to school there or had any connections there. You could read up on the company's website and check regularly to see if they had any job openings. You could also see if anyone you knew had any inside information about job opportunities there or anyone that you could meet with. You could go do a tour of the school just to start getting a sense for what it was like and who worked there. These are just some examples of innovative ways to get your foot in the door.

Finding recruiters who specialize in your field is an excellent strategy. There are countless recruiting agencies and many have focused on specific industries. Ask your network of contacts and search online to find out which recruiters and agencies may be able to help you. Job boards are a popular place to find recruiters as they will often post jobs for their clients. You may not want the job they posted in that instance, but you can use it to lead you back to the recruiter's website or contact information and that can be the starting point for finding someone who can help you find the job you seek.

In your resume strategy, be sure you are not investing too much time in one area, putting all your hopes in one specific job. Diversify. Even if you have found what you think is that one perfect dream job, remember that statistics show that one in two hundred resumes sent out will result in a job offer. To increase your chances of getting hired, you must apply to several jobs and be persistent. Manage your time and resources and find several opportunities for which you are a strong candidate. Do not put all your eggs in one basket.

Once you've polished your resume to perfection and strengthened your overall strategy, you should be an unstoppable job seeking force to be reckoned with. Put it all together and you may just impress yourself with how far you've come and how well you are able to present yourself.