

## RESUME – TIPS FROM A KORN FERRY CONSULTANT

Of all the tasks, this one causes more procrastination than almost any other: writing a resume. People dread it—they just freeze up. Every time they sit down at the keyboard or pick up a pen, they get writer’s block. Or else they bogged down in the minutiae: Times New Roman versus Calibri, or whether it’s better to say “achieve” or “accomplish.”

All this angst over trying to be the Ernest Hemingway of resumes is rooted in one problem: They just don’t know where to start.

Here’s what I suggest when approaching your resume:

- **Take the “TV interview” approach.** In a television interview, a person usually gets no more than 20-40 seconds to make a point. That’s the goal here. Your resume is going to capture the most salient information quickly and concisely.
- **Do some timed brainstorming.** Stop overthinking! Give yourself a series of timed exercises that will help you get to the most important material—quickly. For each of the prompts below, set the timer for two minutes and write five bullet points:
  - Tell me about yourself.
  - Describe what you’ve done.
  - Tell about a time you overcame a challenge, exceeded your goals, etc.
  - Describe your five biggest accomplishments.
  - Identify your two biggest failures.
- **Video yourself.** After you’ve finished each prompt, take thirty minutes to read, reflect, and revise. Then video record yourself answering each prompt. Your goal is to produce a concise 60-second answer for each. Revise and record until you are satisfied.
- **Adapt your “script” to your resume.** Using this script outline, begin to write your resume. But never, ever describe yourself as “innovative,” “energetic,” “a team player,” “a self-starter with a can-do attitude,” or a “good communicator.” These words and terms are so overused they have become meaningless.

Now that you know what you want to say, writing your resume should be far easier—or, at least, not as painful. As you undertake the writing task, remember no format, typography, layout, or keywords will automatically make your next interviewer say, “Wow, we have to hire this person!”

Your resume is a calling card—nothing more. The objective of the resume is secure an Interview. That’s why my advice is to “lose the resume,” meaning don’t expect it to do more than 10% of the work of getting your next job or promotion.

A resume that's a B+ in terms of format and attractiveness but comes from someone with A+ experience (involvement with, for example, top-notch consulting firms or Fortune 100 companies) will win over the inverse: a beautifully written A+ resume from someone with only B+ experience. Content and relevancy matter most.

Another piece of advice: don't ask your partner/spouse, parent, best friend, or anyone else who loves you to critique your resume. The people closest to you—the ones who say, "We believe in you!"—are unlikely to tell you the blunt truth that your resume is gibberish or lacks authenticity. Hire a coach or ask a mentor (such as a former boss in your network) or someone at the alumni/career services office at your alma mater. A resume critique needs to be from someone with a sharp eye and a willingness to give you tough love, not a pep talk.

When you've finally revised your resume, don't consider it done. A resume is not meant to go back in the mothballs as soon as you land your next job, only to be taken out and dusted off again when you start job-hunting in the future.

Review and revise your resume on an ongoing basis—maybe once a year, whether or not you're "in the market." Recording your accomplishments as you achieve them is far easier than trying to remember everything five years later. And, that will help you keep your LinkedIn profile or other social-media presence up to date, which is the real living document.

When your resume is fresh and relevant, there's no need to dust it off or hone an edge that's gone dull. It's already sharp—and so is the way you're presenting yourself.

#### **About the Author**

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