

Excerpts from



How to get paid what you're worth by
avoiding common career roadblocks

by
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Fast Track Your Job Search (and Career!)
Second Edition – 2010

Myth # 6

A great résumé is critical to career success.

In the 20th century, when people changed jobs infrequently and the Internet was not yet available, job searches were focused on rewriting résumés multiple times, mailing out résumés, and cold calling employers. Résumé distribution services flourished despite questionable quality because there were shortages of experienced workers in many areas. In the waning years of the century, Internet web sites sparked a frenzy of impersonal job and résumé postings. The Internet became a useful tool for many job seekers.

Then, the world changed. At the end of the century, job seeker activity volume flipped from snail mail to Internet blasts and job board applications, with billions of résumés clogging hiring process arteries. More frequent job changes (whether desired or not) drove many job seekers to the functional résumé format in order to downplay out-of-work intervals, inconsistent career tracks, etc. Self-promoting puffery pegged readers' incredibility meters. Recipients replaced résumé shredders with electronic databases.

The rules have changed. Today, placing too much emphasis on revising or distributing resumes can be a roadblock for you progress. A great résumé is desirable, but its strategic importance as a career tool has decreased greatly. A résumé is not normally sufficient to generate interviews with desirable new employers or with other organizations within your current employer. *The face-to-face meeting (in advance of a formal job interview) has become a far more effective career tool than résumé mailings, mass distributions, and job board applications.*

FAST TRACK strategy: Strive to meet with contacts and hiring decision makers without sending a résumé in advance. Avoid sending your résumé to anyone unless there is a critical need for it. Help others understand your value to their organization first rather than leading with your résumé. Read *How to Land Your Dream Job* (Fox, 2007) by Jeffrey J. Fox, except for Chapters 12-15 and 40. Strategically delay providing your résumé and don't volunteer it unless there is a strategic benefit of doing so.

Résumé Formats and Content

The traditional Bronze Age job search was pretty simple:

1. Check the phone book for employers of interest in your area.
2. Update your résumé to add your last or current job.
3. Compose a well written cover letter and mail it with the résumé.
4. If no callbacks, get on the phone and call the companies.
5. If this doesn't work, get a new list of employers and repeat steps one through four until you get a job offer you prefer.

Today, the above process may work for getting a shift job at McDonald's, but its success rate for professionals and executives is extremely low. Extending this process onto the internet and onto email systems is *even less* successful.

Hiring authorities have preferences for receiving job candidates. For the 5-10% of jobs that are posted online, a war of resumes may be pre-ordained. For the majority of jobs, however, screening hundreds of résumés and interviewing anonymous job applicants is pretty low on their list of preferred hiring methods.



Figure 6-1
Typical Hiring Authority Preferences

Figure 6-1 indicates the typical preferences for obtaining job candidates. For illustration, I have assigned somewhat arbitrary values of 0, 2.5, and 5 points within each category. Let's say the hiring authority would like to hire a candidate who is a current employee (internal vs. external). Also, she would prefer this person be someone whom she knows and whose work quality she knows. These factors would make this candidate appear to be a less risky choice than one who does not have these characteristics. The known candidate gets 10 points (5+5) out of 10. If this job

candidate were also given one or more recommendations from other employees, this would be ideal because this candidate would appear on the surface to offer the least amount of risk. Most humans, including hiring managers, are risk averse.

Contrast this “10” candidate who has everything going for them with the other end of the spectrum. Job seekers who apply online for jobs and who transmit resumes to unknown hiring authorities are approaching opportunities with no situational leverage. Such seekers are unknown and are represented solely by their résumés. Unemployed job seekers have the least leverage.

The two previous examples help explain why, in more competitive job markets, highly qualified external unemployed job seekers have a low probability of landing advertised positions and why they frequently lose to internal candidates. It is possible for an unknown, unemployed candidate to land a job. But, it is not likely when the job is published and there is significant competition. Unpublished jobs generally offer unemployed candidates far greater odds of success.

What about recommendations to hiring authorities? In general, recommendations from external sources are not as highly valued as are recommendations from internal employee sources. An example of this is when a hiring authority is introduced to a candidate by an external recruiter. Unless there is a very strong relationship between the two parties, the authority will typically discount the recommendation of the external recruiter somewhat because the recruiter may be viewed as having a self-interest in getting someone they refer hired. I have spoken to many recruiters and heard such motives expressed frequently: Helping a person land a job is a way for a new external recruiter to get their foot in the door with prospective clients who can pay them recruiting fees in the future. There is nothing sinister about this. It makes good business sense.

Some clarification of the wording used in Figure 6-1 may also be helpful. “Know you and your work” means the hiring authority knows you well enough to like you and has a high regard for your work. “Know you or your work” means they know one, but not both.

You can debate the exact pecking order of the hiring food chain or what weighted numbers should be assigned to each level in Figure 6-1, but the fundamentals are hard to deny. They are:

- ❑ Hiring decision makers want to minimize their risk because bad hiring decisions can affect their group’s performance, their perceived professionalism with their peers, etc. Each job candidate has a relative perceived risk factor and most hiring decision makers are risk averse. Reducing your perceived risk, in whatever way possible, will increase your odds of getting hired. This is why your shortest path to a job in a new employer is most predictably through a warm internal referral.
- ❑ Hiring managers prefer to interview and hire employed candidates rather than unemployed ones. Recruiters are frequently told this by employers who feel they could go out and get all the qualified unemployed job seekers they desire. (This may not be true, but it is how many feel.) It is not illegal to discriminate against

the unemployed as a group. For employers open to interviewing unemployed workers, being out of work more than six months can be a larger concern because the unemployed “age” over time. *Note:* Most career books soft-peddle or ignore this fact, but I believe you need to understand this reality so you can play the game more successfully.

- Other global factors may override the typical preferences indicated in Figure 6-1. One such factor is geography. If the hiring manager is dying to hire you (know you and your work, you come highly recommended, etc.) but the company will not pay to relocate you, then this is a serious roadblock for you. Restraints such as this may greatly affected hiring choices. In these instances, you have to get creative if location or another factor is working against you.

If you have a well written résumé but you have decided that applying online and through mailings are a relative waste of time (hooray!), what do you do with your résumé? My best advice is memorize the aspects of it that you need in order to relate your value in networking meetings and job interviews. Practice out loud what you want to say in certain situations until you can deliver your messages without sounding rehearsed. Then, don't remove your résumé from your folio during networking meetings or interviews unless it is absolutely necessary.

Delaying the presentation of your résumé is a smart strategy to consider during your personal communications. This is especially true for one on one networking meetings. Whenever your résumé surfaces you risk interrogation by the résumé Gestapo. Any minute detail may then be pondered and discussed ad nauseum. You may get unrequested amateur résumé writing advice that will cause you concern as to whether to revise it for the 17th time. You may lose control of the conversation. Overall, delaying the presentation of your résumé on a consistent basis will help you avoid turning nice, relaxed conversations into work history inquisitions.

Fast track tip: Your résumé can derail productive conversations with corporate hiring decision makers. It can also consume many revision hours that would be more productively invested in other activities. Having coached many job seekers and talked to more additional job seekers than I can count, one of the most unproductive things I have noticed is wasting time re-writing résumés due to a lack of consistent professional advice. (Exception: When talking to a recruiter or other resume screener who is part of a formal hiring process in which you are participating, you must fork over the resume to keep the process moving forward and you may want to edit your resume to make them happy.)

Some seekers jump back and forth between résumé formats and revise their content as they speak with unknowledgeable advisors who tell them they need to change it one more time. They meet other job seekers who are likewise being whipsawed by inconsistent advice. These seekers are happy to share their “kernels of wisdom” and further muddy the water. Be careful.

Most people who give you advice on your résumé do not know what they are talking about! This includes many recruiters, HR people, and hiring managers. For some unknown reason, HR people think they are résumé experts and many job seekers think HR people are résumé experts. This is a myth.

What about customizing résumés to apply for jobs online? For the target audience of this book (professionals and executives) I recommend you reduce your time spent applying for such jobs to a minimum. This suggestion will eliminate a lot of time you would otherwise be spending revising your résumé, filling out employer nonsensical questionnaires, sprucing up your cover letters, developing T-letters that match your qualifications to the job posting requirements, etc. Since less than 5-10% of all jobs are found this way, why bother spending more than 5-10% of your time doing this? The subject of online job search will be discussed in more depth in another chapter.

Whenever you have an urge between 8:00am in 5:00pm M-F to bang out a large volume of online job applications, simply push yourself away from your computer, get dressed, and get out of the house to do more one-on-one networking (or other, more productive work). The same goes for urges you may have to revise your résumé one more times per the latest input you received.

Two last points before discussing resume formats. First, most people write their resume as if a reader will actually sit still long enough to read the whole thing. This seldom happens. It is most effective if you write your resume assuming readers will spend no more than 30 to 60 seconds skimming your resume for key points of interest to them. Also, most people write their resume in a manner that is most pleasing to themselves. This is frequently not the best approach. It is important that you write your resume in a manner that will be most pleasing to the people who will be reading your resume. Keeping these two global perspectives in mind will help you generate a better final product.

Résumé formats

Given that the résumé should not consume a lot of your job search time, doing it right the first time will help you achieve this goal. Choosing a fundamentally sound résumé format and sticking with it will greatly reduce wasted time. Selecting a format requires you understand widely accepted options and the reasons for selecting one that is right for you.

The following information addresses résumés to be read by human beings. If you know your résumé will scanned or used for keyword searches by software systems, please read additional articles on this subject to assure you do not confuse the computers.

The balance of this chapter describes resumes for corporate professionals and executives. If you are less of a traditional corporate type, such as a “creative” or artist, then there are many variations you may consider. The wide range of these

options is beyond the scope of this chapter. Consult general resume books for examples while keeping the fundamentals that follow in mind.

The three most popular résumé formats for traditional corporate hiring of professionals and executives are reverse chronological, functional, and combined. Let's take a look at each of these formats.

The reverse chronological format

Reverse chronological résumés are generally regarded as the most acceptable and popular. Over 90% of the résumés employers see today follow this format. It emphasizes the listing of the writer's Professional Experience (employers, positions) and below each position heading are bulleted responsibilities and accomplishments.

This type of résumé begins with the most recent position and works backward to the oldest position. The work experience is many times preceded by a brief Objective and a Summary or Profile of the writer. The Professional Experience section is normally followed by Education and, on some occasions, a Personal section. Ending with a list of references or "References Available on Request" is normally not desirable.

Since employers and recruiters see this type of résumé routinely and are comfortable with it, the reverse chronological format is recommended for the typical job seeker wanting to play things by the book. Here is a recap:

REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL FORMAT Name and Contact Info Objective (optional) Summary or Profile Professional Experience Education Personal (optional)

The functional format

The second major format is the **functional résumé**. Functional résumés have been out of favor for some time. The first page or so of a functional résumé is generally dominated by headings such as Marketing, Sales Leadership, Financial Management, HR Benefits Administration, Executive Leadership, or other descriptors which categorize chunks of functional job experience of the writer. Under each such heading are responsibilities and/or accomplishments.

Some professional résumé writers have tended to use the functional format in order to de-emphasize gaps in employment, an inconsistent pattern of professions, lack of career growth in title or responsibilities, etc. *Most readers know this* and immediately begin to analyze why the writer chose this format. Since this generally raises negative questions in the minds of employers and especially in the minds of

recruiters, the functional format is not recommended unless you know that the reader will prefer it. Here is a recap of the typical functional résumé flow:

FUNCTIONAL FORMAT Name and Contact Info Summary or Profile Functional Headings and Details Professional Experience (abbreviated info) Education Personal (optional)

The combined format

The third major format is the **combined (or hybrid) résumé**. It attempts to marry the best aspects of the two previous formats. While there is room for debate as to the precise configuration of a combined/hybrid résumé, this format normally contains all the elements of the functional résumé – with the functional headings and their associated details condensed. Alternatively, it may contain some functional details as a single grouping of information with no functional headings.

Let's face it. The combined format is a compromise résumé style that looks like it was designed by a committee. For those who believe that a functional résumé would be best for them (which is normally not true) but are concerned about the downsides of functional résumés, the combined format represents a more tolerable option.

Additional ideas for improving your “human” résumé

There you have it. The three standard résumé formats. Virtually every résumé book at the bookstore and library will provide endless reverse chronological examples and a few of the other two types. So, is that all there is? My answer is a resounding "NO".

If you are bold enough to be creative, there are many worthwhile variations to consider. Varying from the conventional can give you an opportunity to differentiate yourself positively and show your innovative spirit. A professional, distinctive résumé can help you stand out from the herd of resume clones—especially the cookbook ones pouring out of outplacement firms.

There are no formal rules for writing a résumé. There are norms and expectations, but you have the freedom to choose the format and content you desire. Here are some variations that you may want to consider. I have found them to be useful in certain situations.

1. If you have a particularly noteworthy education, consider moving it ahead of your Professional Experience. This could be accomplished by either noting your most relevant education in a bulleted area preceding your Professional

Experience or by moving the entire education section up front. Here are some situations that may warrant this action:

- You hold a degree from an exclusive university such as Harvard or Princeton.
 - Your degree is not from an exclusive university, but you know that the hiring manager and/or hiring organization is biased in favor of graduates from your school.
 - You hold an advanced degree in your specialty from a perennial Top 10 school, such as an MBA from Kellogg, Wharton, or Sloan.
 - You have a relatively unique degree that is desired by the hiring manager or organization, such as medical illustration (vs. a standard fine arts degree).
 - You worked your way through school and you know the hiring manager will admire this. (This is only applicable for younger workers who have a one page résumé. By the time you are experienced enough to develop a two page résumé, this and other college information is typically considered too outdated to justify highlighting.)
2. If you know precisely what you want, include a clear and concise Objective such as “Chief Financial Officer” or “VP - Marketing.” While many will argue against this as being too restrictive (I’ve heard this over and over), leaving your desired role to the imagination of the résumé reader can be even riskier. It is likely you will not be called for interviews if readers do not know what you want. A variation from this theme would be an Objective that is more a personal branding statement than a job title. An example of such a personal branding statement would be “Harvard-Educated Consumer Packaged Goods Marketer.”
 3. If you want your résumé to be easier to skim or believe most people will not fully read it (my belief), consider deleting the Profile / Summary section. This section can be omitted when the reader understands what you want (Objective) and your Professional Experience and Education sections are well matched to present a coherent view of your relevancy. It is particularly unnecessary if you choose to follow item #4 that follows.

Fast track tip: Virtually no one reads an entire résumé from start to the finish. It is estimated that 50% of interviewers have not read your résumé before you enter the job interview room. For these reasons, it is important that you format your résumé to gain attention when being skimmed.

4. If you have notable accomplishments in your area of expertise, consider adding a Summary of Qualifications section in front of the Professional Experience section. This is similar to one option for combined résumés discussed earlier, except the less desirable functional information is replaced with much abbreviated and hard-hitting relevant qualifications. *This is a personal favorite* that I have found to be highly effective for many. The choices of what to include

and how to position them takes some strategic thought, but when done well I have found it to yield a strong positive response from readers.

5. If you are capable in more than one functional area, such as marketing and sales, decide if your goal is a position that includes all your functional capabilities. If you want a VP of Sales and Marketing position, then you need both areas highlighted in your résumé. If you are seeking a position in *either* sales or marketing, then your presentation will be more effective if you have one résumé with a marketing objective and one with a sales objective. To make the two résumés more effective, edit your contents to stress your marketing capabilities and accomplishments in one and your sales capabilities and accomplishments in the other.
6. One important point: There are resumes that require an additional section listing job-specific skills. Some examples would be software languages and development systems for a software developer, technologies for a technical sales engineer, etc. If your profession requires that your technical knowledge be listed in detail on other typical resumes, then by all means add a section covering these important details.
7. Last but not least, it is important for you to consider the first impression your résumé will likely have on readers. This applies to all résumés, regardless of the format chosen. Your résumé may only get a 10-15 second scan the first time a recruiter, HR person, or hiring manager reviews it. The objective in this situation is to be placed into the “short pile” of résumés so that the reader will take another look and perhaps be generous enough to give the résumé 45-60 seconds the second time around.

After screening thousands of résumés, reviewers begin to form strong opinions as to what they like and don't like in résumé formats. Here is a helpful checklist based upon my review of thousands of résumés and conversations with many executive recruiters:

- For those out of school for under five years, limit the résumé to one page in most instances.
- For those out of school for over five to eight years and those out a shorter period who have considerable intern/job experience worth mentioning, limit the résumé to two pages.
- One inch (minimum $\frac{3}{4}$ inch) margins on all four sides.
- Reasonable amounts of white space within the printed area.
- A serif font such as Times New Roman or similar as first choice. This can vary by occupation somewhat, so check with decision makers if you are unsure what to use. A non-serif font such as Arial looks more clinical if you like that look.

- ❑ A font size of 11 or 12 for fonts of similar size for Times New Roman.
- ❑ Limiting of each bulleted item to one or two lines.
- ❑ Use of bolding, capitalization, and underlining sparingly to draw the readers' eyes to key words or phrases.

Résumé contents

Let's assume that you have now formatted your résumé into an attractive document that (1) creates a great first impression, (2) conveys key points with a 30 second skim, and (3) is inviting to read when the reader has more time to digest it. Now it is important to review your contents in detail to improve them as much as possible. Here is a helpful checklist that you can use to insure the contents of your résumé are first rate:

- ❑ First, decide how many résumés you will produce. Select the position you most desire (if you will be pursuing diverse roles requiring multiple résumés) and keep this role in mind as you work through the steps that follow for your first version.
- ❑ If you have content that is irrelevant to the role being targeted in this résumé version and you have plenty of content, delete the irrelevant content. This avoids diluting your message.
- ❑ Next, circle all of the numbers on your résumé. Are they impressive? Are they relevant? Are there as many as possible? Do they reflect all of your positive contributions? Do they specify number of people managed, annual dollar savings, revenues generated and comparison to sales objectives, etc.? If not, start digging out as many additional numbers as you can and add them where appropriate.
- ❑ Next, review several expansive online postings for the types of jobs you desire. Identify all key words you feel need to be in your résumé. Work them in to your résumé in an appropriate way.
- ❑ Next, review your résumé for action verbs. Insure you use a wide variety of them and avoid repeating the same verb too many times.
- ❑ Next, review the document to see if you can make it more concise and hard-hitting. Can you remove words or rewrite phrases to trim the word count? Do your best to make each area of your résumé as crisp as possible.
- ❑ Next, if you are adding a Summary of Qualifications section, select the items you want to highlight at the top of the first page and add them there. I recommend five to six.
- ❑ Next, verify that the formatting of your résumé is consistent. Are all of the items properly aligned vertically and horizontally? Do all the dates of

employment line up? Is the spacing between elements of the résumé consistent throughout the document? Is the font type and font size consistent? (You can use more than one font size, but limit the number of them and maintain paralleling element consistency of sizes.) Is the font size large enough for a typical older executive to read comfortably and yet small enough to not look clunky?

- ❑ Next, review the document by running a spell checker. Then read it word-for-word to check for grammatical errors and any additional spelling errors not identified by the spell checker. Then, get a friend who is good at editing to read it. Many errors are missed by spell checkers because the misspelling of a word may actually spell correctly another word you did not intend.
- ❑ Save each version of your résumé with a uniquely identifying file name such as resume_john jones_operations manager_082709. If you tweak your résumé for a specific job, label it uniquely such as resume_john jones_operations manager_ABC Corp.

Now, provide a hard copy of your résumé to several people and ask them to review it in detail. Ask them to mark up your résumé with changes/edits they would recommend. Ignore the comments regarding the overall format (reverse chronological, etc.) and focus on those that involve your content. Use your own judgment in making changes because everyone has an opinion and you will never please everyone. Don't even try.

If you are seeking diverse roles and have decided you will develop more than one résumé, repeat the previous process for each additional version of your résumé. When you have all your resumes well crafted, promise yourself to maintain self control and resist the urge to constantly be tweaking them.

Video résumés and career web portfolios

With the advent of the Internet, people began posting their résumés on résumé/job boards. Some technically motivated careerists took another step beyond this. They reserved a URL, bought web site hosting services, and posted a copy of their résumé online. Only a few people did this because it really didn't buy them much. Recruiters in the Web1.0 realm were not leveraging search engines and, without some type of web search strategy, the odds of a recruiter finding the person's résumé site was tiny.

As the Internet grew and some recruiters became better trained at finding needles in the Internet haystack, the odds of résumé sites being found began to grow. A few more people began to create their own résumé sites.

Some career management companies began to offer such job seeker sites as a (supposedly) value-add service, eventually embedding video self-presentations of their candidate clients. This, for the most part, was ineffective because the candidate videos were of poor quality and the majority of candidates presented themselves

poorly. If still available, go to the web site www.resumetube.com and view a few of the “employee” video resumes of job seekers in order to get an idea of what I saying.

Personal videos are only recommended if you have sufficient production expertise to produce a quality video, sufficient on-screen performance expertise to deliver your message in an impressive manner, and sufficient writing expertise to compose a great story line. I would love to see one that was well produced, but haven’t seen one yet.

During 2008/2009, a new generation of web self-promotion surfaced that takes the lifeless résumé web page in a more effective direction. This new generation career tool has been labeled by at least one technology provider as a “Career Web Portfolio.” Such sites are designed to showcase your overall career capabilities in a highly professional manner. They can be leveraged during active job searches and, of possibly more importance, they provide an ongoing advertisement allowing you to be located by recruiters and others when you are not actively job seeking.

Some site vendors utilize Adobe® Flash® code to make certain elements of the site more interesting to view. Some may offer a wide range of web site “skins” that utilize graphics and images that are customized to your profession and/or industry. As of this writing, an example of such an executive’s site could be found at www.webportfolios.net/samples/warrenscott/index.html.

Cover letters

There will be occasions when you need to submit your resume in a formal manner. These typically require a cover letter. Approach your cover letter development from the perspective that it is an introduction to your resume and must be brief. Unless specifically requested by the employer, err on the side of brevity. The following cover letter provides an example format which you can vary based upon specific stated requirements and your own intuition:

John Jones * 555 12th Street * Anytown, NY 11112
johnjones@zmail.com * 555-555-1212

June 12, 2009

Ms. Jane Johnson
VP, Customer Service
ABC Corp.
12 55th Street, Suite 55
Othertown, NY 11111

RE: Director of Customer Service position

Dear Ms. Johnson,

I am writing to offer my relevant customer services management experience in application for your Director of Customer Service position. Your job description appears to be an excellent match with my areas of expertise.

A few of my notable accomplishments which appear to be relevant to your stated position requirements include:

- **Managed a \$5.5MM P&L**, insuring annual expenses and revenues were consistently on plan.
- For more than four years, successfully **led a national customer service team** of 80 company professionals deployed in five states, with 450 associated contract service technicians.
- An additional eight years of customer service team leadership that included cost reduction initiatives amounting to \$850,000 and service index improvements of 4% to 7% annually.

Thank you for your consideration of my accomplishments and résumé.

I will call you in the next few days to discuss how we may proceed. You are also welcome to call me on 555-555-1212 if it is convenient.

Best regards,
SIGNATURE
John Jones

Attachment: Résumé

Summary

Most career seekers spend too much time rewriting their résumés and plaster the world with them. If you are spending days or weeks focused on your résumé then it is highly likely you are applying your mental effort in the wrong direction. The best formula for success is to develop a great résumé and then send it after meeting with people – not before.

Note: My résumé suggestions may cause some readers to pause and think to themselves “This guy doesn’t have a clue. He is telling me to not send a résumé to people. I can’t get to first base with recruiters or hiring managers without sending my résumé. In addition, my résumé is my stand-in wherever I cannot meet someone in person. Sending it out to a lot of people helps me make more contacts than I could ever make through person-to-person encounters.”

While there is some element of truth in such an argument and there are exceptions, in my experience most of the assumptions of this argument have little merit. One exception would be if you are in a profession or industry that is desperate for people. If this is true for you, then I concede that wallpapering the world with your résumé may give you a good shot at landing a job quickly. A second exception would be if you are applying for government jobs (especially federal ones). Résumé formats and the job application processes are different for federal jobs versus private sector jobs. This chapter has been focused on private sector jobs and you will need to study in great detail other books in order to become knowledgeable in applying online for government jobs.

SUCCESS EXERCISE

Whether you are in the midst of a job search today or preparing for one in the future, some attention to your résumé may now be justified. It is a great career strategy to update your résumé each time you have a major change involving your job title, job responsibilities, employer, or industry. This keeps it current and better insures that you capture accurate information before it escapes your cranial cavity.

Based upon my experience and feedback from a wide variety of hiring managers and recruiters, here are some questions you need to ask yourself *before you begin* updating or revising your résumé:

Is my résumé visually appealing, especially compared to other résumés of people whose judgment I respect? If so, great. If not, here is what I need to do to improve the first impression and visual appeal:

Since most résumé readers will glance over my résumé for 10-15 seconds for a first impression of my background, what does such a brief “skim” of my résumé suggest about me? What facts are readers likely to identify first during this brief skim?

Are these the facts that I noted for the “skim” the facts I want the reader to first notice? If so, then I am in good shape so far. If not, I need to make changes to bring out the facts I want noticed and de-emphasize (or eliminate) the facts I do not want noticed.

If my résumé makes the first cut during the 10-15 second skim, then I need to strengthen it for the 45-60 second “read” that tends to come next. The reader’s desire

now will be to begin to understand my career progression, my last 10 – 15 years of companies and job titles, my notable accomplishments, my education, etc. What facts are readers likely to identify during this 45-60 second “read” of my résumé?

Are the facts that I noted for the “read” what I want the reader to notice? Is the reader likely to see my notable accomplishments and consider my career progression to be positive? If so, then I am in good shape so far. If not, I need to make changes to guide the reader in a positive fashion.

Congratulations! By completing this exercise you have taken major steps forward to insure your résumé is competitive and it reflects you positively when read by a human being. You are now ahead of most of your competitors. If you are not sure how to accomplish the actions discussed in this chapter, you may want to consider getting help from a professional resume writer or career coach.

Caution: Most of the suggestions in this chapter will help you when constructing a resume to be read by software screening systems. **However**, some global format changes will definitely be necessary. To insure that you meet all requirements for software screening, you need to study one of the many resume writing books on the market that detail this topic.