

Writing Your Résumé:

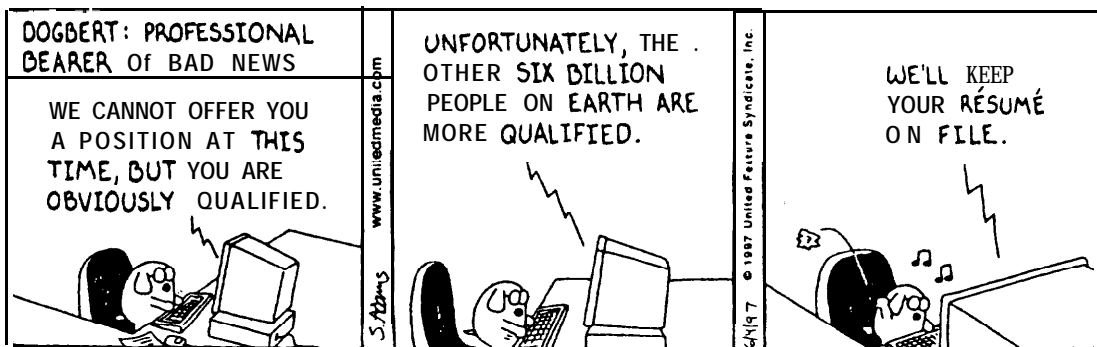
CHAPTER 8

Win or Lose in the First Ten Lines

By Donald Asher

The hottest resume style in use today is the profile style. It is what fast-track heavy hitters have been using for years to blow the competition out of the water. When a profile resume is done right, it is a beautiful, flawless device, the perfect marriage of form and content. Most important of all, it is so effective it is scary.

Why does it work so well? Because it answers that all-important question--"What can this candidate do for me?"--in the first ten lines. Then it goes on to let the reader know that the candidate is genuine, not a faker, in the rest of the document.



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The perfect career resume has these three distinct parts: the heading, which you just wrote; the profile of what the candidate has to offer; and the chronological career history, both work and education, which is the proof that the profile is true. The profile works only because the proof is right below it. The profile and the chronological sections are a one-two knockout punch. In advertising parlance, you have the sizzle and the steak all in one place.

When you answer the all-important question in the first ten lines, you are doing everybody a very big favor:

- Your resume will be sorted into the “yes” pile *without even being read*.
- Your résumé will be routed to the hiring authority *without even being read*.
- Whenever it is read, it will be reviewed with focused interest *right from the top*.

Obviously this saves everybody a lot of time; you are capitalizing on the fact that screeners take only seconds to screen resumes. You have actually made an asset out of the biggest problem most other resumes face.

The Profile of a Winner

It is common knowledge that your resume is an advertisement for you. In advertising, the profile is what is known as the “hook,” the lines at the top of an advertisement that get you to read the copy underneath. There are car ads in national magazines with as many as five hundred words in them, about the same number as in a two-page executive resume. All these ads have a hook at the top, e.g., “WOULD YOU DO THIS TO YOUR KIDS?” Otherwise, no one would ever read those five hundred words. It is the same with your resume.

The names for a profile section may vary, but your heading could be any of the following:

- PROFILE
- INTERESTS
- EXPERTISE
- STRENGTHS
- AREAS OF SKILL & KNOWLEDGE

So how do you write this magic bullet? Simple. **First**, make a subheading that describes your functional area of expertise, such as: “Secretary / Administrative Assistant / Executive Assistant” or “Sales / Account Management.” You can use a title, “Accounting Manager,” but a functional subheading such as “Accounting Management” will give you more latitude. Remember, one company’s “Controller” is another’s “Accounting Manager” is another’s “Chief Accountant.” By using a broadly worded target, such as “Accounting Management,” you will be in the running no matter what the company calls the position.

If you are interested in more than one type of job, you must choose which to focus on in this resume (you can focus on the others in later versions). You must target your resume from the top down; every single word is selected according to the following formula:

Put your information in order of interest to the targeted reader.

For every distinctly different type of job you seek, you will need to have a distinctly different resume.

So, you have your paper out, or your computer on, and you’ve finished your heading and drawn a line from margin to margin. You know what your target is. You are now trying to get the attention of a busy resume screener in a matter of a second or two. Write your profile heading and your functional subheading now. Do not worry about doing this perfectly; you can always change it later.

Here’s an example:

EXPERTISE

ZEON Reliability Engineering

Next, once you have selected your heading, answer the \$64,000 question in the employer's mind: "What can this candidate do for me?" Go back to your notes on the ideal candidate, circle the skills and attributes that you actually have, and make them into a little paragraph or sequence of bulleted statements. Remember, you are the subject of each sentence: "I am able to . . ." "I have nine years of experience at . . ." "I have a solid grasp of . . ."

Do not claim skills that you do not have. If you cannot find the pencil you were just using, *please* do not claim you are "well organized and systematic." If you cannot balance your own checkbook, *please* do not claim to be "good with figures." If you are terrified to deal with strangers, *please* do not claim you have a "strong sales aptitude" or a "(friendly, outgoing personality)." The time you waste will not only be your own.

Make precise skills claims. Every grouch thinks he has a sense of humor, and every manager in business thinks he has "excellent written and oral communication skills." If you want to tell me about your communication skills, tell me that you have the "ability to design and deliver DOT-compliant driver safety training programs" or that you are "bilingual, French-English, including translating technical and legal documents into/out of either language." Prove you have technical, insiders' knowledge of the targeted industry. Avoid making a list of vague general business skills.

Remember, you are answering the question "What can this candidate do for me?" directly. You are listing **features, attributes, traits, skills, and strengths**. You may choose to include accomplishments or experience, but remember that experience alone is not what the employer wants to buy; she wants to buy the skills that should come with that experience. And remember, thirty-five years of experience is also "more than fifteen years of experience." Don't let anyone know you are ninety-five years old. And keep it short, less than ten lines.

Use every opportunity to slant your resume to your future. You can write a profile that begins "Interest: Real Estate Sales," even if all your sales background is in career dresses—or vice versa. Be sure to differentiate *ability* from *experience*. "I have the ability to run a marathon" is a totally different statement from "I have experience running a marathon." (This is a full-fledged resume trick; do not use it unless you really can run a marathon, if you get my point.)

Technical resumes work exactly like nontechnical resumes: They feature the candidate's skills and abilities right at the top, but they may include more tangential skills than nontechnical resumes. The trend is away from laundry lists of skills in dozens of different systems, applications, and platforms, and toward a claim of greater expertise in a few areas. However, if you are building a skillset for an Internet or scannable resume, be sure to throw in the kitchen sink. (See chapter 13, "Scannable, Internet, and HTML Electronic Resumes," for more.)

Note that this heading and skills *profile* entirely replaces the old notion of an objective. You are offering your expertise, not acting as a supplicant for a position. My favorite resume sin is an objective like the following: "Seeking a challenging and rewarding position with a progressive company with opportunity for professional growth and advancement." What does this mean, anyway? Not only is it vacuous, it is permeated with the wrong point of view. "Challenging and rewarding" for whom? "Progressive" according to whom? "Professional advancement" for whom? This does nothing to answer the employer's primary concern: "What can this candidate do for me?" Only use an

“Objective” heading when you really have little or no experience or skills to offer for the targeted position. In that case, objective may be your best choice.

One last thought: Do not be tempted to use the term *entry* level in your heading, or anywhere else on your *résumé*. It also is the wrong point of view. The job may be entry level to you, but to the hiring manager it is just another position that needs to be filled. Remember, at all levels you have skills to sell that the hiring manager wants to buy. Sell your skills; do not beg for a job.



Write the rest of your profile now, drawing from your notes on the ideal candidate. To help you get started, I have pulled a few profiles as samples. Do not read ahead in the book. Finish your first draft of your profile now. Your goal is to get every major point into your profile that you want to convey to your potential employer. **Don't try to do this perfectly the first time!** Just draft a short paragraph modeled on one of the following examples. Try to get all your ideas out, and come back to your profile after you have written the rest of your *résumé*.

Samples

SKILLS

Office & Administrative Management

Ability to prioritize, delegate, and control administrative work flow to manage office or entire business. Skills encompass hiring, training, and supervision of support staff; design and implementation of policies and procedures; in-house accounting through trial balance; customer and public relations; liaison to banks, CPAs, and vendors; and support to strategic decision-making through timely access to financial and other data.

EXPERTISE

Hospitality IT — Installation, Training, Support

- . Experience includes conversion planning, business analysis, installation/implementation, diagnostics and troubleshooting, user training, telephone consulting, follow-up support.
- . IBM ST/99 & ST/100, NCR 3822, Xeta, Northern Telecom SL10, Spectradyne, Teletron Energy, Honeywell, Extel Cornexpert, IBM Life Systems Controller.
- . Hospitality Data Control, SSI & Utilities, NCR FSS, Tel-Trak X.37 & X.1 1, IHC Global Reservations, Delphi Sales & Catering Systems, Acorn Bookkeeper, Chouinard & Myhre P/R, ATS, and most other common applications.
- . Available for 100 percent travel and/or relocation as needed.
- . Proficient in Spanish; basic French, Japanese.

PROFILE**Registered Dental Hygienist**

Stable and reliable, three years with current doctor, five years with prior doctor. Professional orientation is toward preventive treatment, periodontal maintenance, and patient education. Friendly, good with patients. Also experienced in office administration duties. Excellent recommendations from all doctors.

EXPERTISE**Retail & Commercial Real Estate -Acquisition, Planning, Development**

Strengths include cash-flow projections, valuation forecasting, and financial and economic analysis of real estate development projects and investment assets, as well as presentations, negotiations, management, and oversight. Experience with both retail and commercial projects in the \$10 million to \$150 million range.

PROFESSION**Consultant to the Mortgage Banking Industry****Strengths:**

- . **Systems & Operations Conversions & Mergers**
 - . **Reconstruction of Records, Loan Transactions & Histories**
 - . **Operational Reviews, M&A Due Diligence, Expert Witnessing**
-

SKILLSET

Network Controller with wide range of other telecomputing/data telecom experience. Effective combination of technical and communication skills.

- Hardware:** AT&T Dataport II
CODEX
General DataCom
TRS XF 372.X, 327.X, 712.X
- Software:** NCCS, NPDA, VTEX, NRS, JTCL
MRI/XA, TSI/ISPL, MR/XLNT, MRI/SCRIBE
NETVIEW REAL, NPO
- Specialist:** NEX SNA network installation and maintenance.
Some experience in network design.

EXPERTISE

Sales of Floor Coverings (wholesale and to-the-trade)

- . 16 years in soft goods/4 years in hard goods.
 - . 20 years of representation to architects and designers.
 - . Background includes high-tech/commercial/industrial applications.
 - . **Proven performer** with **sales records** on behalf of every employer.
-

PROFILE

Clinical Psychologist, State of Louisiana, with expertise in the following areas:

- . Business, Careers, EAP, Organizational Behavior
- . Psychotic/Severely Disturbed
- . Alcohol & Substance Abuse
- . HIV & AIDS Issues
- . Family & Community Services
- . Testing & Diagnostics