

The Bypass Guide to Sharpen Your Resume

Reading time - 5 minutes

Welcome to the *Bypass Guide to Sharpen Your Resume!*

Before you start searching for your next career opportunity, the most important action you can take is to sharpen up your resume.

Updating your resume is something you should do every 12 months, no matter how happy you are in your current role. There may be changes to your role and responsibilities, completed projects to add, and skills acquired. You may never know when you get a tap on the shoulder by a better opportunity, and having an up to date resume is ideal.

This guide will help you sharpen up your resume for any occasion, and give you some advice on crafting a cover letter that makes your application stand out.

Sharpening Your Resume

Keeping a resume up to date is a vital life skill and should be reviewed every 12 months. Given how busy most employers are, your resume would be lucky to receive more than a 20-second glance before the employer decides to review again or scrap you entirely.

We will look at how to capitalise those 20-seconds to make sure you are at the top of the pile.

Continually ask yourself; "If I were an employer, how does this information make me want to hire this person?" That will guide your direction.

Know the Purpose

The purpose of your resume is to land an interview, which in turn will get you that next step in your career. You need to remember that when you add or remove anything from your resume.

Know your Skills & Qualifications

Employers want to know your Skills and Qualifications first and foremost. These need to be relevant to the roles you will be applying for. List your relevant skills without using buzzwords or boring language. Be honest and make yourself sound interesting. If you cannot make yourself interesting, how can you expect an employer to be interested in you?

Know your Roles

You must tailor your resume for the role you are applying for. If you are 35 years old and looking to apply for a senior estimator role, no employer will care about how you stacked shelves at Coles when you were 17. Only provide the most relevant experience.

It is significantly better to have a lean but relevant resume, than a resume full of fluff that doesn't mean much to anyone. List your employment history, starting with the most recent jobs first.

Know your Accomplishments, not your Job Description

The person you are applying for knows what a Site Manager or Engineer does. If you must describe your Position, do so in less than two sentences. Instead, you should focus on the accomplishments of the company.

For example, an estimator could type "priced a range of projects from \$150k house refurbishment to \$50m 108 apartment project in Melbourne CBD." A site manager could type "managed on-site team of 12 staff and 50 subcontractors on \$20m commercial site". List the key projects you worked on at each role.

Know your References

You should have three references who can vouch for your performance at work. If you are in a management role, it may be appropriate to have one of your direct reports as a reference who would be comfortable to vouch for your management abilities.

These references should be professional in nature. Having personal references, such as family members or friends, is not appropriate and does not look good in the 20-second glance.

For the sake of the employer, you must inform your references that you have provided their details and they may get a call from potential employers soon. If an employer catches a reference off-guard and unaware, your chances of being perceived as an honest player decrease significantly.

Putting it Together

Formatting

Here are some tips when writing your resume;

- Use a clean font. Examples include Arial, Calibri, and Lato.
- Font sizing
 - o Use larger font size for headings, and make them bold. Size 16 works well.
 - o For sub-headings, keep them bold and drop to size 14.
 - o For regular text, drop to size 10.
- Use bullet points instead of paragraphs. Your resume should be a chunk-sized summary of you as a person, not an essay of your life.
- Save the file as a PDF, not a DOC or DOCX file. Using PDF stops any formatting errors and makes it look the same for everyone.

Structure

The below structure is a clear, easy way to layout your resume;

- Personal details. Name, phone number (mobile preferred), email, and address.
- Skills & Qualifications (remember, make them relevant to the role you want)
- Previous Experience (your roles, most recent to oldest)
- Awards & Recognition (nice to have, but not required)
- References

As mentioned above, it is better to have a relevant, lean resume than a fluffy resume filled with useless information.

The Cover Letter

A relatively recent development in recruitment is the notion that a cover letter is not required. Recruiters claim that they will make the introduction and sell you to the employer and therefore, you do not need to explain yourself.

The problem is, anyone can make a resume and post it to 100 recruiters and employers and wait for responses to come back. The candidates of real substance take the time to write a personalised cover letter that relates to the role they are applying for. This personalised touch will put you above the pack and give you an edge over the competition.

What goes into a cover letter?

A cover letter should be a short page before your resume, of no more than 200 words. A usual cover letter looks like this;

To Tony,

I wish to apply for the role of Senior Estimator at Bypass, posted on Bypass.net.au on 3rd March.

My work experience includes estimating at numerous construction companies, on projects ranging from \$300k refurbishments to \$30m+ apartment projects. I have spent the last six months as an intermediate estimator, helping train three junior estimators, and am now seeking to grow into a Senior Estimator role.

I firmly believe that my skills will be an asset to Bypass, given your current projects and reputation. I have included my resume below.

I genuinely appreciate that you have many candidates to review and look forward to discussing my application with you soon.

Thanks,

David Jones

The above is a good example showing the message tailored to the company, and how you found their ad. It very quickly lists your experiences, and what you want to achieve. It is also respectful of the employers time. Remember, lean is better than fluffy.

Ideally, the cover letter will be in the document before the resume. If you cannot merge the documents, do your best to attach it along with a resume where you can.

Need help?

If you need further assistance sharpening your resume or writing a cover letter, feel free to reach out to us by email (team@bypass.net.au) or phone (1300 314 125).