

Create a semi-reusable résumé

Simplify the job application process

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One of the cardinal rules of the job search is that each résumé should be targeted to the specific position being applied for. Going into your word processor and creating one résumé that you send out for every application, regardless of the industry or company, is a surefire way to never get called in for an interview.

Ideally, you should craft a résumé for each and every position you're interested in so that your skills and experience appear tailor-made for that particular employer. Realistically, no one has the time or patience to start from scratch every time they sit down to apply for a job. Most job seekers are applying to several jobs each day and need a way to simplify their search without sacrificing quality.

"Creating a résumé is hard work," says Louise Kursmark, executive résumé writer and career consultant. "It requires self-reflection, research, careful writing, smart editing and thorough proofreading. If you tried to write a new one every time you applied for a job, you'd do nothing but write résumés, and that is not the way to conduct a job search."

The key is to take your time and plan ahead. "I don't think job seekers should have to do a lot of rewriting and customizing of their résumés, assuming they are looking for similar types of jobs," Kursmark says. "Write it once — make a strong case for yourself as a great candidate. You might have a couple of different versions that you use to respond to slightly different types of opportunities, but writing an individual résumé for each application is time-consuming, inefficient and a prime opportunity to introduce errors."

Employers won't necessarily know you used a ready-to-go template when they see your application materials, unless of course it has the same exact font and layout as other résumés in the stack. They will recognize one that is relevant to their needs, Kursmark reminds. This is why customization matters. Jean Baur, author of "Eliminated! Now What? Finding Your Way from Job-Loss Crisis to Career Resilience," stresses the value of tai-

Know how to start

"Write your primary résumé from the perspective of your ideal job, then consider minor edits to allow you to apply to a broader range of related positions," Kursmark suggests.

Don't start with a pre-built template that you find in a word processor or online. You can use a template as a guide, but don't force your information to fit within its parameters because no two job seekers have identical needs.

"The easiest way to customize a résumé is to include a 'core competencies' section that you can adjust to reflect the exact keywords used in a job posting," she says. "Assuming that job is roughly in line with your primary job targets, you shouldn't have to change much else."

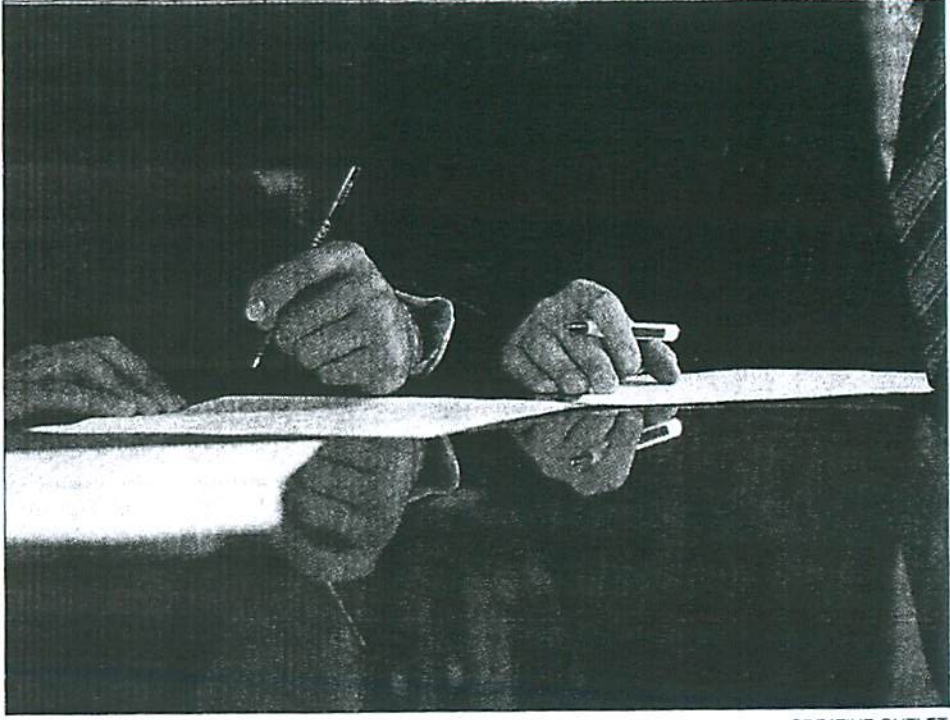
Keep in mind, however, that the advantage of a reusable résumé is its flexibility, so don't think any component is permanent.

"Any element of your résumé can be omitted, expanded or condensed in response to a particular opportunity. It's better to omit items that are irrelevant than look like you are not focused in your search," Kursmark cautions.

Why it matters

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CREATIVE OUTLET

Job seekers should create a résumé that can easily be customized and tailored for specific interviews.

loring your résumé. "Throughout the job search process, you want your target companies to feel that you are specifically interested in them. By customizing your résumé and using some of their language (often found in job postings or their website) you begin the critical task of proving that you're a good match."

Don't forget that you also have the cover letter to target your application and augment your résumé. Cover letters allow you to say what your résumé can't.

"It's possible to leave the résumé alone and tailor the cover [letter or] email," Baur says, but some hiring managers look at the cover letter last or not at all. Therefore you risk tailoring the portion of your application that will go unread. Ultimately you need to remember that you

should customize as much as possible within the amount of time you have. Regardless of how much of your résumé you reuse, always ask yourself if your application sounds like someone who wants that particular job.

"Many job seekers write generic résumés because they are trying to make themselves appealing for a vast variety of jobs. They say they don't want to limit themselves and want to be open to opportunities," says Kursmark. "But because they haven't written the résumé from a strategic viewpoint, with specific jobs in mind, the résumé often ends up being too broad and vague to resonate with employers."

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