



EXECUTIVE-LEVEL

Resumes

Executive-level Resumes

As an executive, you may have never needed a resume to get a job in the past. Through your network, jobs have come to you. Recruiters have found you on LinkedIn and head hunters called you on a regular basis. In the current world of executive job searches, your resume will probably not be your first introduction to hiring decision makers. Yet, you still need to have an updated one.

If it has been several years since you have written or updated your resume, you will be in for a surprise. Resumes have drastically changed in the past several years and if this is your first executive-level resume, you will need to reassess what has been on it in the past. The main purpose of your resume at this junction of your career is to be a personal branding document. It should differentiate you from your competitors and highlight your accomplishments.

10 Tips for Executive-Level Resumes

one

Make it specific: a generic resume will simply fall flat. It needs to be specific to the industry, company and job that you are applying for. Which means that you will need to tweak your resume for every single job you apply for.

two

Be concise: pare down your content ruthlessly. Only skills and accomplishments that are relevant at the executive level should be on your resume at this point. Don't waste space reiterating obvious responsibilities. Two pages is a standard length for an executive resume, but if you are a superstar, you can go to a third page.

three

Stress accomplishments and results: quantify your results. Your resume should read more like a performance evaluation than a task list or job description. Be sure to use the right keywords for the industry and job that you are applying for.

four

Have clear formatting: use a familiar, non-frilly font in 10 or 11 point, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 1 inch margins, and limit bold, italics, underlining and caps for emphasis. Check spacing, dates, punctuation, spelling, grammar and order of information.

five

Do not use a template: templates make it hard to customize your resume and you don't want your resume to look exactly like someone else's. Many templates are not optimized for Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), either.

six

Show your personal brand: brand yourself and the attributes, passions, strengths and qualifications that differentiate you from your competitors. Branding helps show that you will fit with the company and makes you come alive on the page.

seven

State your value proposition: what is the unique value that you offer? This needs to be easily evident, monetized and linked to your personal brand.

eight

Provide context: if a company is not immediately recognizable, hyperlink the company name to the website or list it separately. Start with a one- or two-sentence summary of the company to give the reader a frame of reference for the work you did.

nine

Add your web presence: at this level the recruiter will be doing a web search on you. Make it easier for them to find the information you want them to see about you by including links to your LinkedIn profile, Twitter handle, personal domains or blogs.

ten

Show your personality: your resume needs to differentiate you from your competitors. What makes you special, and the right fit for this particular company and job? What are you passionate about? Be sure to keep the resume professional, but make sure your personality shines through.



What to include on your executive resume

Name and Contact Information

List your full name, current address, best phone number to reach you at, professional email, and LinkedIn.

Headline

Use this to grab the recruiter's attention and show that you are the best candidate for the job. It should be a hard-hitting personal brand statement that includes the most relevant key words for the job and describes the 'return on investment' of hiring you.

Skills Or Qualifications

Lay out the skills and qualifications you have that the employer is looking for in an obvious, clean, concise way. Only include high-level strategic and leadership skills that would be used at the executive-level position you are applying for. How did you leave a job better than when you started?

How will you
make a high-level
impact at this
company?

Professional Experience

Do not simply list a string of tasks that you have done at each job. Instead, back up your skills by providing specific examples of how you impacted the company. This should be a quantifiable, results-oriented list that shows how you improved the company, met goals, and made a profit. Include things like time frames, percentages, return on investments, number of people supervised, awards, quotas, key accomplishments and other quantifiable information pertaining to your industry.

Use Headers That Show Expertise In Your Target Field

For example, Communications Experience, Finance Experience, Research Experience, International Experience or Non-profit Experience.

Education and Training

Place at the bottom of your resume – at this level it is your experience, not your education, that is going to land you the executive-level position. From present to past, list school, location, degree, date awarded, major, and minor. If you are worried about age discrimination, you can leave off your graduation year. List any industry-specific training or certifications you have.

What will the
recruiter remember
about you in six
seconds?

Honors and Awards

Only list any recent and professionally relevant honors and awards either in your education section (i.e. graduated summa cum laude) or in a separate category (i.e. American Marketing Association Member of the Year).

Professional Affiliations

Only include those that are of interest in your field. Include any titles or significant roles that you have within organizations. Listing memberships that reveal your race, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or gender identity may encourage or discourage employers from interviewing you. The choice is yours whether or not you want to reveal such information this early on.

What to leave off your executive resume

Multiple phone numbers or emails

– just list one of each, make sure it's a professional email address, is not AOL or Hotmail, and that the phone number listed won't be answered by your 5 year-old.

Too much detail about your college years

– no one cares that you were in the glee club 25 years ago.

Responsible for

– just plain old boring. Use robust action verbs instead.

Objective

– it makes your resume look dated! Employers care about what you can do for them, not what you are looking for. Instead, go with a headline.

Reference available upon request

– the recruiter will ask for reference when they want them.

Exaggerated titles and responsibilities

– be honest, because eventually the truth will come out.



25 great keywords for an executive-level resume

- 01 new business development
- 02 strategic thinking / planning
- 03 corporate administration
- 04 organizational leadership
- 05 team building
- 06 crisis management
- 07 strengths-based leadership
- 08 collaboration building
- 09 performance optimization
- 10 metrics development and tracking
- 11 innovative leadership
- 12 innovative management
- 13 vision alignment
- 14 global oversight
- 15 consolidated
- 16 accelerated
- 17 integrated
- 18 standardized
- 19 negotiated
- 20 resolved
- 21 surveyed
- 22 surpassed
- 23 benchmarked
- 24 leveraged
- 25 streamlined

Executive-Level Resume FAQs

Q What format should I use?

A A functional resume focuses on your skills rather than your work experience. A chronological resume lists jobs and education in reverse chronological order. A combination resume highlights your marketable skills first (as in a functional resume), then adds your employment history and education (as in a chronological resume). As an executive, your resume should be a combination resume.

Q Do I need to put the year I graduated from Smith on my resume?

A If you are worried about age discrimination, you can leave it off. Realize that an employer may assume you are older by leaving it off, so make the decision on a case-by-case basis.

Q Should I put my volunteer experience on my resume?

A On an executive resume it is good to include high-level volunteer work, as many executives are expected to be connected to their local communities. This experience can be listed in a nonprofit experience, community experience or volunteer experience section. List the name of the organization, your title (i.e. Vice-President of the Board) and what you accomplished at that organization (i.e. developed new protocol for evaluating executive director or raised over \$500,000).

Q I volunteer for political, religious, and other possibly controversial organizations. Should I include these on my resume?

A This is a personal decision. There is always the risk that this information could hurt your application, and the potential employer may make a judgment about you and whether or not you will fit in with the culture of the organization.

Q I have a large gap in my resume from raising my children, being laid off or taking care of my health. How do I address this?

A Add to your resume all of the additional things that you did while out of the workforce. If you have been volunteering during this time, taking any classes, running a home-based business, staying involved in a professional organization, or doing occasional consulting add that experience to your resume. You want to show the employer that you used your time away from the workforce productively. If it is a short gap, you may be able to hide it by using years, and not months, for your dates of employment.

Q I am self-employed or do a lot of freelance work. How should I list that on my resume?

A If you have a name for your company, use that and list it the same way as your other jobs. If you do not have a company name, you can simply use your name, such as "Sandra Smith Consulting." Your title can be the actual task you perform, such as IT consultant, tax accountant or lawyer. You can also use the same titles as a section heading and list select projects you have done under that. You would want to pick and choose the assignments that make you the most desirable candidate for the position you are applying.

Q How do I write a resume if I am interested in more than one type of job?

A You should create a different resume for each job and industry that you are interested in. A resume needs to be specific to the job that you are applying for, so each time you send a resume out, you should tweak it to fit the exact job.

Q Do I need to hire a professional resume writer?

A If you have the time, writing skills, and your resume is landing you interviews, then you do not need to hire a professional resume writer. If you have not had any call-backs on your resume, you may want to consider working with a professional to update your resume. The Office of Alumnae Relations at Smith can help support you with resume writing and give you feedback on your resume. If you are looking for someone to completely write your resume from scratch, you might want to consider hiring a professional resume writer. Be sure to do your homework and find someone who knows how to write executive level resumes and understands the industry you work in. Find out more about the writer, ask for references and be sure to know what is included in the cost.

How does your resume differentiate you from your competitors?

Notes

The
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