



## 2. Creating an Effective Resume

You may wonder why you still need a resume in an age where employers can Google you and tools like LinkedIn allow you to create something similar to a resume. But you still need a resume and here's why:

- **Your resume serves a different purpose than an online profile.** Its main purpose is to get you an interview. Your profile on a social media page, such as LinkedIn, is first and foremost a networking tool.
- **It has a long tradition other tools don't.** Resumes have been used for years and are an expected part of the job search process. You'll almost always be asked for one.
- **It's more flexible than other tools.** While there's a lot you can do with an online profile, a resume is still easier to target to a specific job or opportunity.
- **It's more portable than online profiles.** When you're networking or at a job fair, for example, it's nice to have a document you can pull out and share with others.
- **It may offer a more fair and objective screening process.** Because online profiles can contain photos and other personal content, biases may enter into the review process.

Your resume communicates your qualifications and your brand – who you are and what makes you different – to employers and recruiters. In a tough job market, you need a resume that helps you stand out in a sea of applicants.

### A great resume:

- Grabs the attention of employers and recruiters
- Sells your strongest skills and accomplishments
- Shows why you're a potential match for a position or project
- Communicates both your current capabilities and future potential
- Helps you take the next step in your career
- Most importantly, gets you the interview!

As you can see, your resume remains a key marketing document and an essential part of your job search toolkit. In fact, the work you do in preparing it will serve you well in all your job search activities, from networking to interviews and beyond. Keep in mind that **there is no such thing as a "one size fits all" resume**. In order to achieve the goals of a great resume (outlined above), you must customize your resume to fit the specific job criteria each time you apply for a new position.



## Demystifying the Military Resume

For those who have served in the military, [My Next Move](#), a feature of O\*NET Online, is an excellent tool to convert military skills into skills that civilian employers will understand. You can input your military occupation via the alpha numeric code or your occupation title. This will give you a list of civilian occupations that also use those transferable military skills. Researching these occupations will enable you to see if they are a good match. In addition, you will find a wealth of civilian terms to use in your resume so prospective employers understand the value you bring to the table.

## Resume Writing Strategies

Although there are options for what type of resume you might select to use, it is highly recommended that you make your resume a targeted resume. This format will allow you to highlight your skills to a prospective employer. Each time you apply for a new job you should review your resume to ensure that you have made the appropriate changes in order to better “target” your skills to that job. One resume will not fit all jobs to which you apply. The employer should know that you made the effort to read the job description or requirements and then tailor your resume to their job.

It’s easy to create a resume that looks like everyone else’s. But to win that interview, you need to go further. Here are three strategies that take you beyond the standard, cookie-cutter resume and get you noticed.

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[Sell yourself and your brand.](#) Make it easy for employers to pick you. Communicate who you are, what you offer, and what makes you different from other applicants.

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You choose brands all the time – when you’re buying food, clothes, and other products. Today, career experts recommend that you think of yourself as a brand. In a tough job market, you need to stand out. Knowing how you’re different from other job seekers and the value you bring to the employer helps you do this. Also, employers are short on time and attention. You must communicate who you are and what you offer quickly and concisely. And you should only offer information that’s relevant.

In the example that follows, Beth Smith promotes herself as “highly motivated” and “tech-savvy.” She backs this up by listing relevant skills, such as SharePoint and Microsoft Project, and also including a testimonial from her company’s CEO. Her brand? A dynamic, highly motivated project coordinator who’s ready to “hit the ground running”!



## Beth Smith, CAPM

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### Project Coordinator

Highly motivated, tech-savvy professional with over 5 years' experience in a fast-paced consulting environment. Extensive experience supporting senior consultants in high-profile technology projects. Exceptional analytical ability and talent for managing information. Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) certification. Proficient in:

- Project Coordination
- Project Setup & Monitoring
- Project Communication
- Microsoft SharePoint
- Microsoft Project
- Microsoft Excel

*"We needed to streamline our SharePoint project file system to work more effectively with clients. Beth volunteered for the project. She then analyzed the system and developed a more efficient process that we're using across the firm. She did a great job managing the project from start to finish."*

*—John Grant, CEO, Grant Technology Consulting.*

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### Skills Summary:

#### Project Coordination/Management

- Led a project to streamline and reorganize SharePoint project management system, resulting in more accessible information and enhanced support for clients.
- Coordinated project plan, scheduling and budgeting for small but high-profile project during project manager's absence. Praised for initiative and problem-solving abilities.
- Coordinated the research and production of client-winning training proposals.
- Streamlined proposal development process, resulting in significant time savings.

#### Advanced Administrative Support

- Prepared best-practice guidelines for archiving project documents. Guidelines simplified document management process and were adopted company-wide
- Conducted research and trained staff on new techniques for document versioning that significantly reduced retrieval time and lost documents.
- Planned and assembled materials for high-profile client meetings.
- Created new client tracking system using Microsoft Excel.



## Employment History

2005 – Present: **Senior Administrative Assistance, Grant Technology Consulting.** Advanced administrative support and project support for senior-level consultants.

2001–2005: **Administrative Assistant, Training Solutions, Inc.** Advanced administrative support to top marketing executive in fast-paced training start-up company.

## Professional Development

Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM), 2009

Microsoft SharePoint Power User Training, 2010

Microsoft SharePoint End User Training, 2009

Advanced Microsoft Project, 2008

Advanced Microsoft Excel, 2008

## Education

Associate Degree, Business Administration & Management,  
Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, 2001

## Professional Associations

- Project Management Institute
- American Management Association, Individual Member



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Highlight your accomplishments. Anyone can list duties and responsibilities, but accomplishments give you credibility. They also help your resume come alive.

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When reading your resume, the first thing an employer wants to know is, “What has this person done that can help us at our company?” You can help answer this question by including your accomplishments. Be as specific as possible and include numbers to show how much of a difference you made in the situation.

Here are some questions to help you think about your accomplishments:

- Did you bring in new business by creating a new product or service?
- Did you help retain customers by ensuring high-quality products and services?
- Did you save time and money by making a process or procedure more efficient?
- Did you communicate well with customers and employees?

To identify your accomplishments, career experts often recommend a method called *CAR* (Challenge, Action, Result). What challenges were presented to you? What action did you take? What was the result?

Here’s an example from our sample resume for Beth Smith, an administrative assistant looking for work as a project coordinator:

Challenge	Action	Result
Beth was asked to look at the company’s online project file system, which was disorganized and hard to use.	She analyzed the system and reorganized it so information was more logically arranged and easier to find.	She made consultants’ work easier, which saved them time and allowed them to serve customers more effectively.

Think about what you did in past jobs. What problems did you solve? What solutions did you come up with? What specific benefits did this have for the business, customers or employees?

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Use keywords effectively. The specific words you use in your resume are critical for communicating your value, both electronically and in print.

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You’re already familiar with keywords from using the Web for research, shopping, and other activities. They’re the words you type in, such as “Sony flat screen TV,” to find information on a product or service.



For the purposes of your resume, keywords are words employers use to describe what they're looking for in an applicant. They're important to include in your resume, because they:

- **Identify you as a potential match for the position.** This is true whether the resume is in electronic format or in hard copy, but it's especially important for electronic format.
- **Make your resume more credible.** For example, when you name a specific software application, such as Microsoft Project, rather than saying "strong computer skills," you gain credibility.
- **Show that you are part of the team.** When you "speak the language" of an industry, you sound like someone who belongs to the team.

Think of keywords as the "buzzwords" or "jargon" of the industry. Below (in bold) are examples of keywords that might appear in a job description for a sales assistant:

- Job titles (**Sales Assistant – retail**)
- Business functions (**sale order processing**)
- Responsibilities (**analyze sales order data**)
- Required abilities (**strong analytical skills**)
- Degrees or diplomas (**Associate degree in Business**)
- Computer applications (**SAP Sales & Distribution module**)
- Companies (**IBM**)

The single most important source for keywords is the **job description** of the position you're applying for. But you'll find keywords anywhere you find job-related information. Jot down terms you come across frequently as you're doing your [resume research](#). Keywords are especially important in the top portion of your resume - but they can, and should, be used throughout. See these [sample resumes](#) and these additional samples of [targeted resumes](#) for ideas.

Follow the strategies above, and you'll have a unique and powerful resume. Better yet, when you hear "Why should we hire you?" at an interview, you'll be ready with answers!



## Why are spelling and grammar so important?

Your resume and cover letter represent YOU to a prospective employer. That means you want these products to reflect positively on your attention to detail and accuracy – traits valued by employers in all industries.

Employers may view typos or grammatical errors as evidence of carelessness or limited communication skills. Use spell check – and then get a friend or family member to proofread what you have written to catch any mistakes.

## Visual Resumes

We live in a visual world, so why not elevate the look of your resume to make it stand out? A visual resume performs the same basic function as a paper or PDF resume – it communicates your professional objectives, strengths, qualifications, and experience – but in a dramatically different format. It goes way beyond good paper, a clear font, and a professional headshot. It's a document that maps your accomplishments and career in a 1-page timeline or infographic. You can send employers a custom link to it, download it into a Word or PDF format to share, or snap a screenshot to post it. This probably sounds intimidating if you don't have any graphics experience, but don't worry, many affordable, and even free tools are available that will help you create a visual resume that stands out. A simple search of the term "visual resume" in any of the major online search engines will bring up many options.

## Career Portfolios

A career portfolio goes beyond a resume and a cover letter to *show* a prospective employer your work experience, skills, accomplishments, etc. It includes information about who you are and examples of your work and achievements. A traditional resume is included in a career portfolio along with written and/or visual information that highlights what you have to offer.

So, what types of things go in a portfolio? [Quintessential](#), a longstanding career development website, provides a listing of the types of things you should consider including in a career portfolio, such as:

1. **Career Summary and Goals:** A description of what you stand for (such as work ethic, organizational interests, management philosophy, etc.) and where you see yourself in two-to-five years.
2. **Professional Philosophy/Mission Statement:** A short description of the guiding principles that drive you and give you purpose.



3. **Resume:** A summary of your education, achievements, and work experience, using a chronological or functional format.
4. **Skills, Abilities and Marketable Qualities:** A detailed examination of your skills and experience. This section should include the name of the skill area; the performance or behavior, knowledge, or personal traits that contribute to your success in that skill area; and your background and specific experiences that demonstrate your application of the skill.
5. **List of Accomplishments:** A detailed listing that highlights the major accomplishments in your career to date. Accomplishments are one of the most important elements of any good job search.
6. **Samples of Your Work:** A sampling of your best work, including reports, papers, studies, brochures, projects, presentations, etc.
7. **Testimonials and Letters of Recommendations:** A collection of any kudos you have received — from customers, clients, colleagues, past employers, professors, etc. Some experts even suggest including copies of favorable employer evaluations and reviews.
8. **Awards and Honors:** A collection of certificates of awards, honors, and scholarships.
9. **Conference and Workshops:** A list of conferences, seminars, and workshops you've participated in and/or attended.
10. **Transcripts, Degrees, Licenses, and Certifications:** A description of relevant courses, degrees, licenses, and certifications.
11. **Professional Development Activities:** A listing of professional associations and conferences attended – and any other professional development activities.
12. **Military records, awards, and badges:** A listing of your military service, if applicable.
13. **Volunteering/Community Service:** A description of any community service activities, volunteer or pro bono work you have completed, especially as it relates to your career.
14. **References List:** A list of three to five people (including full names, titles, addresses, and phone/e-mail) who are willing to speak about your strengths, abilities, and experience.

A career portfolio will also set you apart.<sup>4</sup> Despite the obvious advantages of having a portfolio, few employers see them during interviews. So how effective are they? Verizon Wireless “talent connector” Krystal Dominick says only three or four applicants out of the 300 interviews she conducts annually come in with a portfolio. And how many people in that small group were hired? “All of them got jobs,” she says. “The portfolios really help them showcase their experience and their job histories.”

The benefits of developing a career portfolio go beyond having a useful tool to showcase yourself. The *process* of creating the portfolio is also a valuable way to prepare for networking and interviews. Through the effort of identifying, writing about, and organizing your experience, education, skills and



accomplishments, you will be prepared to speak easily and confidently about yourself to prospective employers.

## E-Portfolios

E-portfolios or online portfolios provide the same information as a traditional career portfolio but in an online format. E-portfolios are visually appealing, easy to update and efficient to share. A quick internet search for “E-portfolios” will bring up many options.

## Effective Cover Letters

The main purpose of a cover letter is to encourage an employer to read your resume. Most cover letters involve three steps: explain why you’re writing; elaborate by referring to your qualifications; and close with a suggested plan of action.

- 1. Explain to the recipient why you’re writing.** Are you replying to an ad? Were you referred to the recipient? Did you read some news about the recipient or the company that suggested they might be hiring? What’s the situation?
- 2. Address your qualifications for the opportunity.** Given what you know about the recipient’s needs, what can you offer that’s of interest? Make reference to your resume, but don’t just repeat what’s there. Elaborate and expand as needed.
- 3. Explain how you intend to follow up.** Today more than ever, it’s the sender’s responsibility (yours) to follow up after sending your resume. In the last paragraph of the letter, say how and when you intend to do this.

As a general rule, only one paragraph would be required for Steps 1 and 3, while Step 2 might involve two or more paragraphs. The letter itself should not exceed one page. This sample cover letter below, written in response to a referral, uses four paragraphs. Here’s a slightly shorter version of the same letter in [e-mail format](#). An e-mail cover letter must do the same job as the regular cover letter. However, since it’s likely to be read online, it’s important to be brief.



## Beth Smith, CAPM

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Mr. Paul Jones  
Senior Project Manager  
Platinum Software Consulting  
1234 Drury Road  
Milwaukee, WI 53204

Dear Mr. Jones:

I'm writing because John Allison suggested you might have an opportunity for project coordinator for your upcoming Century software project.

John tells me the project will require someone with strong Microsoft SharePoint knowledge. As you can see from the enclosed resume, I ran a project at Grant Technology that involved streamlining the SharePoint file system. The new system is now in use firm-wide.

I also understand you would prefer someone who is certified in project coordination. I earned my CAPM from the Project Management Institute in 2009. The training I received gave me new insights into the importance of strong project coordination for software projects, especially for busy consultancies such as Platinum.

I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss your requirements for the Century project. I will call you on Tuesday, June 15, to inquire about setting up an interview.

Sincerely,

Beth Smith

Enclosure: Resume



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*Think about which resume format best suits your needs. Then, using the information you've studied in this section, write your resume and a mock cover letter. Practice makes perfect! If you are working with a case manager, be sure to follow their instructions, too.*

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*To document the completion of these activities, we recommend that you save your work To document the completion electronically in an easily accessible location, with an appropriate file name and date.*

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