

# RÉSUMÉ WRITING FOR EXECUTIVES

How to craft a document that'll get you in the door and off the job market.

On January 26, six major U.S. companies announced cost-cutting measures that slashed about 71,400 jobs, the most ever reported in one day. The news brought January's total layoffs to more than 200,000. Add that to the 2.8 million jobs lost in 2008, according to CNN Money.com, and you've got what one executive recruiter described in the understatement of the year as a "strong supply of candidates right now."



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professional, it's helpful to review the essentials.

In a teeming talent pool, the best life vest for any executive is a well-written resumé. Whether you draft your own or partner with a

## Executive Summary

Research shows that you've got about 20 seconds to grab the reader's attention and persuade her to continue. It is critical to provide your name and contact information at the top of the first page followed by a pithy profile that consumes less than a third of the page.

Lead this executive summary with a compelling narrative of about three sentences that convey your unique value proposition to a prospective employer. Tell who you are, what your main strength is and how it can benefit an organization. Don't focus only on your current work—capture the essence of all you have to offer. For example: "Dynamic HR executive driving global transformation initiatives in multiple industries" is a better start than "VP of HR with responsibility for compensation and benefits programs."

Then, use bullet points in your executive summary to highlight areas of expertise and competencies. These keywords will trigger HR software systems to drive your resumé to the top of the heap.

## Professional Experience

Next, in reverse chronological order, list your professional experience. Include the company name and location, your title and length of service in each position. Provide a one-sentence explanation of your company to guide an interviewer's questions. Include facts such as annual revenue, industry ranking, number of employees and global footprint. In the next few sentences, outline accomplishments and outcomes as well as responsibilities. Place emphasis on how you get work done and the positive impact your team has had on the business. Offer more detail about your most recent positions and edit earlier experience down to the basic facts.

## Associations and Education

Include a succinct list of the professional associations to which you belong, noting leadership positions you have held and important contributions you have made to your field. Highlight industry awards, publications and notable speaking engagements.

In a separate section, provide the details of your education. Executives who have attended prestigious schools or have earned advanced degrees may want to mention them in the executive summary on page one. This gives interviewers the information at first glance rather than waiting until the last page of your resumé.

## Beyond the Resumé

Information such as family status, religion, political affiliation, hobbies

and country club memberships do not belong in an executive resumé. Instead, experts recommend that executives develop other tools to augment the resumé.

**One-page bio sketch:** This paints a more personal picture through a narrative, conversational tone and may offer some personal facts as icebreakers.

**Cover letter:** Tailor your cover letter to each distinct opportunity and echo the language used in a position description.

**Curriculum vitae:** This is appropriate for executives in academia, technology and research who want to detail their professional and scientific publications.

## Resources

Busy executives may prefer to work with a professional to draft their resúmes and polish them to perfection. Resumé writing services abound. The Career Management Alliance provides a roster of certified **Master Resumé Writers**. **TheLadders.com**, a Website for job hunters earning over \$100,000, offers a resumé-writing service. Outplacement firms and career coaches also provide assistance.

Ultimately, no one knows you as well as you know yourself. Thoughtful executives will use the opportunity of updating their resúmes as a chance to reflect on their accomplishments and their goals. The best resúmes will translate experience and skills into marketable assets that can bring stability and clarity to a baffling economy.

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