

NEW RESUME, NOW WHAT?

So, you have a shiny new resume – what do you do with it now?

First things first:

Save the file with a file name that is easy for someone else looking at it to know what it is.

For example: Yourlastname_Resume_2020

You will be sending this along to people and you want them to know what it is and who it is from – they will probably have a whole bunch of resumes and will want to be able to easily identify yours. You also want to easily be able to identify it in your files.

General Resume Maintenance:

1. Check in with your resume regularly – as your job experiences and responsibilities change, your resume will need to change, too. Keep older versions, though, once you update – you may find that you want to reference how you worded something in the past.
2. Consider saving a PDF version and sending that one if you are able when you apply to things – sometimes email accounts show previews of Word documents that throw off the formatting and look messy, and some HR application systems can also mess up your formatting. PDF helps “freeze” formatting and keep your document looking crisp when it comes through on the other end.
3. Consider building a 2nd version of your resume – 1 just for you, with everything ever on it – awards if you’ve received them, times you’ve spoken if you have, any certifications you may have or articles you’ve written. You want to just have a record of all your accomplishments so that you don’t forget things later.

Related Documents:

References:

Don’t keep your references on your resume – make a different document just for them, and you don’t have to add “available upon request” – the hiring managers and HR people know that and will ask if they want them. On this separate references document, make sure that you have information on how to get in touch with your references (email and/or phone) as well as their titles and employers. Make sure your identifying information is on top of the document (format it like your resume header if you want to look extra-professional and consistent), and save it with a name along the lines of:

LastName_References_2020

Special reminder: Make sure that your references know they might be contacted and that they have nice things to say about you. You'd be surprised how frequently references are frustrated because they didn't know they were going to be called and/or don't have great things to say, which can put a possible job offer in jeopardy.

Cover Letters:

Yes, if you have the opportunity to provide a cover letter, you should do so. Don't just reiterate your resume in novel format, though – turning your resume into paragraphs isn't the purpose of a cover letter. Focus on letting them know what you are applying for and that you specifically have the skills that they are looking for. Use the job posting as well as their website to help you figure out what those skills might be. Don't focus on why you want or need the job – focus your letter instead on how you can help with what they need. Make sure it looks like an actual letter, too, with your contact information, a professional greeting, and a sign-off. I know this can often be the most annoying part of applying for a job, but a good cover letter helps set you apart from other applicants, can highlight your communication skills and understanding of the job you are applying for, and can, by itself, get you the interview.

Attacking a job search:

Most importantly: **Update your resume for each job you are applying for.** How? Look in the job posting for the key words or skills they are asking for and make sure you tweak your descriptions to highlight those key words or skills, if possible. If they are looking for individuals who have managed a process, make sure they can find that experience easily, for example. If you find that you can't show in your resume the skills they are looking for, then make sure you explain how you have those skills in your cover letter. You may want to pull some jobs off of your resume for some applications to help streamline your experience for them, and you may want to add or remove whole sections, like Speaking Engagements, Publications, Certifications, etc.

Finally, **don't just rely on your resume!** You are the star of your own story – your resume is just your sidekick who likes to tell people how great you are. Utilize your other documents, like your cover letter, which can help tell your story and explain why you are right for a position. Also, a large percentage of jobs are found through friends, networks, and places other than job postings. Make sure that you have a plan of attack for activating and expanding upon your network and letting the right people know that you are searching for a job. It can make the difference between an extended job search and a smooth one.

