

## How To Make Your Resume Specific And Results-Oriented

"I've been getting a lot of tips on how to write it, mostly from my staff. They really seem to be up on this stuff. They tell me I have to use the active voice for the resume. You know, things like "Commanded U.S. Armed Forces," "Ordered air strikes," "Served three terms as President." Everybody embellishes a little." -President Bill Clinton, White House Correspondents Dinner, April 29, 2000

As a professional who reviews resumes on a frequent basis, I see a flood of resumes from different people with different backgrounds every week. Generally the undergraduate/recent graduate resumes I see fall into 1 of 2 categories: they are either very impressive and don't need much work aside from minor formatting issues, or they are good but suffer from a few common problems.

### Common Problems

The two most common problems I've seen are not being specific enough and not focusing on results. If your resume reads, "Compiled information and research," those reviewing it might rightfully think that you yourself don't know exactly what your responsibilities were. Focusing on the results is equally as important: why would someone hire you if you can't get results?

### Sample Resume Improvement

Here's a good example of what NOT to write on your resume, if you are applying for financial services jobs: "-Researched acquisition targets in the construction and home-building industries." This is not specific enough and does not give me any insight into how you did this, what your process was, or what the results of your work were. What resources did you use to research these? Did you speak with experts? Reference the Wall Street Journal? What criteria did you use to make the final selections? Revenue? Profitability? Scale? Management teams? Those are all crucial details left out of this example. Here's an improved version: "-Researched over 100 acquisition targets in the construction and home-building industries using Capital IQ and Factset and narrowed list down to 10 best companies. Used financial screening criteria such as revenue growth and EBITDA margins. Also used qualitative criteria such as market dynamics in construction sub-segments, strength of management teams and exposure to subprime mortgage." This is much better than the first version, but could still use some improvement: the results of your labor. What did you spend all those hours doing, if not for the results? Sometimes people say they don't know what the results were or are not able to directly tie anything to their work. If this is the case, be creative and come up with results. I'm not suggesting that you lie, but as Bill Clinton points out above, sometimes you do have to exaggerate slightly. Don't suggest your beautiful Excel graph resulted in \$1 million of additional revenue, but claiming improved efficiency or time/money saved is fine. Here's an example of how we might add a focus on results to this example: "-Researched over 100 acquisition targets in the construction and home-building industries using Capital IQ and Factset and narrowed list down to 10 best companies. Used financial screening criteria such as revenue growth and EBITDA margins. Also used qualitative criteria such as market dynamics in construction sub-segments, strength of management teams and exposure to subprime mortgage. Resulted in private equity firm doing additional diligence on 3 of the companies." I will admit this is a bit of a stretch - in this particular case, it would be quite difficult to tell what the true results were. And sometimes you may indeed not be able to determine the results. But if your resume does not have a single mention of results anywhere on it, you can definitely find a few instances where you do have tangible results and expand on those.

## About the Author

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