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Resume

Taking Time to Rewrite That Resume

Don't let the challenges of a resume rewrite overwhelm you. Take a look at your skills and successful resumes to get your head in the game.

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She never had to look for work.

As a [Truman scholar](#) and a top-notch statistics, marine biology and water-quality expert with two master's degrees and a Ph.D., work looked for this seasoned professional. Until recently, that is, when the bottom fell out of the economy.

After a recent [layoff](#), the overwhelming prospect of redoing her resume is paralyzing the mid-career scientist.

Because we're hearing plenty of stories like hers, we turned to time-management and [resume experts](#) for help on how to prepare for a major resume update, even if you're going to have a professional do the writing for you. Read on for their tips.



Professional, Google thyself

Henry Motyka likewise found himself overwhelmed when he found himself back in job-search mode after a long career as a [business analyst](#) and project manager. At first, he said, he was overwhelmed and "failed miserably."

Motyka gleaned one crucial tip to shorten the process: A career coach told him to conduct an Internet search on his title to find sample resumes. He searched the terms "Business Analyst Resumes" and "Project Manager Resumes."

Look for the strongest resumes that your search returns for a blueprint of how peers most effectively present their skills and accomplishments.

Talk first, draft later

Cheryl Heisler, president of the lawyer career consultancy [Lawternatives](#), said the best advice she offers resume writers is to "talk first and draft after."

"There is virtually no way to know what a new industry needs to know about you until you have a sufficient understanding of what employers in that industry are looking for," she said.

Heisler said that while sampling industry-specific resumes is a good way to get started, the next step should be getting out and networking with people connected to your target market.

Heisler advised asking such people what skills and talents they look for in a new hire. Next, build evidence of those skills into your resume, "even if you developed those skills in a completely out-of-the-norm industry," she said.

"Many abilities transfer really well from one industry to the next," Heisler told TheLadders. "For example, I work with lots of [lawyers](#) who want to re-career. The technical legal skills they have honed (i.e. writing briefs, drafting contracts) probably won't sell well in alternative careers. But break those technical skills down into their transferable components and you have demonstrated abilities to research, write, analyze, persuade, negotiate and get to a resolution. Those skills are marketable to most

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anyone."

List accomplishments, dump responsibilities

Another way Motyka shortened his resume redo time is by only listing accomplishments and leaving off responsibilities. "No one wants to see those anyway," he said.

Get professional help

"The biggest thing is to get help," Motyka said. "Why waste time? If you aren't sure of what you are doing, get someone who knows to help you."

An overwhelmed mid-career manufacturing/engineering professional did just that, turning for help to Lynda Zugec, managing director of [The Workforce Consultants](#). He was so anxious about writing his resume, he had pretty much just given up, Zugec said.

Try to replicate the coaching experience by asking yourself some of the questions Zugec asked her client:

- What tasks did you engage in at your prior work?
- What time periods did you take to complete the projects?
- What skills did you need at the time?

The conversation only took about an hour, Zugec said. Her client felt so anxious about the task simply because he'd exaggerated his perception of the information required. "Everyone knows what they have done and the skills they used to get there," she said. "It's just a matter of organizing it, and talking through it helps."

Break the work into little chunks

[Life/business coach Julie Melillo](#) said that it's helpful to break the resume-redo task into numerous smaller steps. Her approach:

1. Sit down at your computer.
2. Look through your files and locate your old resume.
3. Print out your old resume.
4. Google "resume makeover" and make a list of helpful Web sites.
5. Look for obvious resume errors.
6. Begin to make changes to your resume.
7. Show your resume to trusted people for feedback.

"Keep asking 'What is the next step?' and write down that step," she said. "You won't start out with a perfect resume. You'll start out with a lot of questions and confusion — and that's OK. Endure through the process of listing out your action steps and you will finish with a completed, stellar resume."

Lisa Vaas covers resume writing techniques and the technology behind the job search for [TheLadders](#).

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