

Resume Rescue

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Resume Rescue: Building a resume that gets results

Your resume is your Number 1 marketing tool. (Actually this is an exaggeration! Your resume is your Number 2 marketing tool. You are your Number 1 marketing tool.)

The sad fact is that if your resume is poor, you will rarely get to deploy your Number 1 tool!

After reading your resume I want to know:

- ✓ **Who you are – who you really are**
- ✓ **What is special about you**
- ✓ **How your skills and experience relate to the need my organisation has**
- ✓ **How to get in touch with you**

Most of the resumes I review miss the mark at least two of these.

The 9 key problems with resumes

1. You don't appear at all in your resume

There is no personality at all in your resume. It's boring, and after reading it I still have no sense of the person you are. When you speak about yourself you are dynamic and interesting. Yet when you write 'official stuff' you lose yourself. It's a marketing document and not an antidote to insomnia!

2. The standard skills shopping list

You have included a list of skills or competencies that look like you copied it from www.find-any-job.com. There's no personalisation of the skills and I could easily swap my name for yours at the top of the page and no one would notice the difference.

3. What you are 'selling' is not apparent

You haven't given me any indication of what I will get if I 'buy' you. What are your special skills or unusual combination of experience?

4. You only tell me how good you are

Telling me you are an 'Excellent communicator who works well across all levels of the organisation' doesn't cut it – anyone can say that. I want evidence of your communication skills.

5. Your 'achievements' are simply fulfilling your job role

Your 'achievements' are non-specific lists of what I would expect you to do in that role. There are no quantifiers and no indication of outcome.

6. Your career has done to you

Your resume lacks energy and you have used passive verb constructions. You are telling me you are an 'innovative leader' and yet your resume reads as if you are a passive passenger along the career journey.

7. It's too long

You have included too much, especially in your early career roles. If you haven't got the energy to edit it, I may not have the energy to read it.

8. Your layout is boring at best and confusing at worst

Your resume looks like everyone else's – boring. The font is too dense with insufficient white space around the text. There are no page numbers.

9. Your contact details are hidden

Working out how to contact you (on the odd chance I might want to) is a challenge as your contact details are buried, and occasionally even forgotten.

How does your resume stack up? If you need help, check out the Resume Rescue on the Resources page of our website: <http://corrinnearmour.com>.

The 9 Resume Rescue tips

Warning: Before you get started, please understand that developing your resume is a significant and time-consuming activity. You are probably very attached to your stories, and so it can be challenging to do the harsh review that is required! Whenever possible have another skilled person review your resume and provide feedback.

1. Get you back into your resume

Allow your personality to shine through. Try talking it out – record your words on your smart-phone and then type them up. Move beyond the official speak. Ask other people how they would describe you and your skills and try some of those words.

If you have been involved in volunteer activities and these add value to your overall profile, incorporate these either as a separate section or throughout the document. A 2011 LinkedIn Poll showed that 41% of hiring managers consider volunteer experience equally valuable as paid work.

There are mixed views on whether to include 'personal interests' in your resume. I usually suggest if there's room, add in a short section that adds value to the overall document. If including personal interests flows the document onto an additional page, leave this section out.

Before Resume Rescue	High initiative and strong results focus.
After Resume Rescue	Initiative and results: Running my own business, maintaining an active community portfolio, and having a young family, requires passion, energy, and a focus on outcomes. A client recently wrote <i>'if the national energy grid ever looks for an alternative energy source, I would recommend you for the job of powering Australia'</i> .

Before Resume Rescue	Strong delivery and solution focus.
After Resume Rescue	Energised by developing and delivering solutions from beginning to end. Inspired by owning challenges and bringing people together to develop and deliver solutions leveraging my extensive B2B and B2C product development expertise.

2. Summarise and illustrate your signature skills

Don't include all the skills you have amassed over your career. Limit your list to the skills you think of as your signature skills. Include a sentence or two that explains how you 'do' that skill. Depending on the layout you choose, you might also give a one-sentence example of each skill in action.

Before Resume Rescue	<p>Key Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leading and managing staff towards financial and service goals• Leading people through change• Strategic thinking and identifying improvement opportunities• Learning quickly and reacting to changing environments in a proactive and positive manner• Developing positive business networks and relationships• Passion for and broad knowledge of health sector• Getting things done
After Resume Rescue	<p>Influence & networks: Bringing people together to share ideas, look for business improvements and shape the business brings me great satisfaction. I am equally comfortable presenting to a large audience as meeting with people from a range of backgrounds one on one. My written skills extend from personal responses to complaints, to Board papers, presentations and industry news articles.</p> <p><i>(and three other broad signature competency areas)</i></p>

3. Get clear on what you are 'selling'

What is special about you? It may be your skills, or an unusual combination of experience. If you find this difficult to work out for yourself, talk to somebody else who understands your work history. Some people choose to highlight this through 2 or 3 sentences at the top of the resume, while others work this in through their key competencies and achievements.

There are two schools of thought – those who believe you have one resume that remains constant, and those that believe your core resume remains the same and you move information in and out to suit the audience. My preference is more towards the former, with your cover letter and/or Selection Criteria Statement highlighting your specific fit for this role.

Before Resume Rescue	<i>(Looked just like any other resume – starting with career history)</i>
After Resume Rescue	<i>(Opening statement)</i> To leverage the skills that have enabled me to make a positive difference in business, to now contribute to the community.
Before Resume Rescue	Career Objective: To achieve a challenging management position where I can grow and become a better organizational leader. Use my broad ranging skills, expertise and training to achieve the company's goals.
After Resume Rescue	Career objective: Seeking an IT management role to apply my unique blend of technology and finance skills, underpinned by strong leadership capabilities. I am at my best when leading and working with people to achieve better outcomes for the organisation through technology.

4. Show me how good you are – don't tell me

Give illustrations of your competency and experience. Anyone can say they are 'results focussed'. Only you can tell me the story of how you delivered Project XYZ against the odds. With this story, your results focus will be obvious.

Be clear on your role and what you did? I am not hiring the team - I am hiring you!

Before Resume Rescue	Strong skills in business strategy and strategic thinking.
After Resume Rescue	Business strategy: Leading multi-million dollar projects with multidisciplinary teams, underpinned by early career experience in marketing, has given me sound understanding of business strategy. This knowledge and experience has helped me to build my own business sustainably and successfully, and to make valued contributions to the business strategy of my executive clients.

5. Your 'achievements' are simply fulfilling your job role

Your 'achievements' must really be achievements - something you are proud of, or that a previous boss would remember. Achievements are always stronger if they can be quantified – an amount of revenue, a percentage uplift in membership, etc.

Before Resume Rescue	Coached senior managers in union related issues.
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After Resume Rescue	Defused Right of Entry dispute with XYZ Union that threatened to stop work on the \$200m ABC Project.
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6. Your career has done to you

Use active verb constructions to give your resume energy.

Before Resume Rescue	Undertake facilitation of workshops ... Was an influence on the CEO through ... I was a leader in ...
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After Resume Rescue	Facilitate workshops ... Influenced the CEO through ... I lead ...
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Ensure that the verbs you use are the appropriate for the role you seek. Too often I see resumes that promote the person as ideal for the role under the one they are applying for. Look at your verbs and see where you can strengthen them.

Before Resume Rescue	<i>(Applying for a HR Executive position)</i>
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- Manage 4 direct reports
 - Involved in HR strategy
 - Conduct training
 - Provide monthly reporting
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After Resume Rescue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead a team of four HR professionals• Develop HR strategy for adoption by the Executive Group• Present induction and HR skills training across the organisation• Report to executive team monthly on key HR issues
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7. It's too long

Three pages is an ideal length. Four pages is fine okay. Five pages is too long. Every sentence and every word should add to your credibility. Objectivity comes more easily when it's not about you, so have someone you trust review your resume with a red pen.

If you performed a number of similar roles with one company, consider merging them into one to reduce complication. Remove any detail that's not directly relevant from early roles. Depending on the length of your career history and the number of different roles you have had, you may choose to simply list the very early roles – organisation, title, and time frame.

Drop 'Referees available on request' – that's a given. Format your referee page in the same layout as your resume and keep it separate to provide when appropriate.

8. Your layout is boring at best and confusing at worst

Remember that this is a marketing document, and that the recruiting manager could be looking at anywhere between 20 and 100 resumes for this role alone. 'Form' will not win over 'substance' - you need both.

Make sure you include sufficient white space around the text. Columns can work well too. Page numbers are a necessity (sounds obvious – you would be surprised the number of people who forget them).

9. Your contact details are hidden

Another really obvious one that can be overlooked – make sure your contact details are clearly displayed.

Other things to consider about contact details:

- Putting your name, phone number, and email address on the footer of every page will ensure that the recruiting manager can contact you even if they can only locate one page of your resume.
- It is not necessary to put your home address.
- Think carefully about whether to put your current work email and phone number. Appropriateness will depend on the role you are applying for, and the organisation.
- Ensure that your personal email address is suitably professional. Mel.Smith@gmail.com is good. sexyMel@hotmail.com not! (You may well laugh – I have seen it happen.)

Resume Outlines

Here are a number of outlines used by my clients. Pick the one that works best for you and modify it as required.

Contact Details
Career Statement
Special Skills
Senior Positions
(detailed & inc Key Achievements)
Previous Roles
(summary only)
Education
Volunteering
Interests
Contact Details

Career Statement
Key skills
Experience *(inc Key Achievements)*
Education/Qualifications
Contact Details

Career Objective
Education/Qualifications
Career Achievements
Employment History
Interests
Contact Details

Contact Details
Professional Profile
Professional History *(inc Key Achievements)*
Education
Memberships

Contact Details
Career Statement
Signature Skills
Awards
Professional Experience
(inc Key Achievements)
Qualifications
Publications & Grants
Personal Achievements
Professional Affiliations

Career Statement
Signature
Competencies
Professional History *(inc Key Achievements)*
Community Activity
Education
Contact Details

And the prize is....

Yes this is all hard work and time-consuming. I promise you that it's worth the effort. Rescuing your resume will double, triple or even quadruple your chances of an interview!

And as an added bonus rescuing your resume will also increase your confidence going into the interview, and that's a good thing.

Get to it!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Corinne." with a period at the end.

Corinne

PS If you think you need professional help to transition your career, talk to me about my **Career in Amber** career transition coaching program for leaders.

About Corrinne Armour

Waging a war on wasted potential, Corrinne's mission is to empower leaders and teams step up to Fearless Leadership. She helps leaders overcome the sense that they and their people can do better.

Corrinne is a highly regarded leadership speaker, mentor and coach. She is co-author of 'Developing Direct Reports: Taking the guesswork out of leading leaders' and 'Cracking the Code for Workshop Performance'. She is author of the forthcoming 'Stop Messing Around; Releasing the potential in your career, your team and your organisation'.



Known for her energy, courage, positivity, innovative approach, and strong results focus, Corrinne is seen as a provoker of change and growth. She works with leaders and teams from a diverse range of industries, such as finance, government, construction, arts and aged care.

Passionate about social justice, Corrinne is on the Board of Wintringham, a Victorian company delivering aged care to homeless elderly. She has also spent two years teaching English in a refugee camp on the edge of a war-zone.

At home, she is a wife and mother to two gorgeous young girls.

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Follow Corrinne

Find Corrinne on Twitter at @corrinnearmour. She tweets leadership insights that she shares with her clients, as well as useful concepts and articles relating to leadership and communication.

PS. I welcome feedback and success stories, so feel free to email me at corrinne@corrinnearmour.com.