

## Resume Strategies for Career Changers

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Are you considering a change in direction in your career? If so, you are not alone. Economic downturns often result in consideration of new, more lucrative career directions. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American will change jobs at least ten times over his/her lifetime and will make a complete career change three times. A thirty-year career with one or two companies is no longer the norm. People move, change jobs, change companies, and change their minds on a regular basis about what they want to do with their working life. Handling that change on the resume can pose a challenge to job seekers.

In the past couple of years, we've seen many people who have lost their careers due to the economic situation. Mortgage, real estate, and construction industries have dried up from underneath the professionals who worked in them. As a result, these individuals and professionals in other distressed industries are often seeking to return to a career field in which they previously worked, posing a resume challenge.

Returning to a prior career field creates an organizational problem with the resume, especially if the most recent career field is not well-related to the earlier one. How can you show the employer you have good experience in business analysis, for instance, if the first thing they see on the resume is your experience in mortgage sales? The challenge faced is establishing the focus of the resume from the start. That means a powerful summary and core competencies section right at the top.

A summary is the most important part of the resume. It has to establish the focus of the job search, show how you are qualified for that focus, and engage the reader to read further into the resume. If the summary does not engage the interest of the reader, he/she will not give the rest of the resume the attention needed to clinch the call for an interview. In a career change situation, the summary is even more important because it has to do double duty – persuade the reader to continue reading and set the idea in the mind of the reader the job seeker has the right qualifications, even if they are not exemplified in the most recent employment experience.

The wording of a career-change resume is crucial. Most career fields have similar base functions – customer service, team work, project work, or business sense. Some have similar skills such as sales and customer service; business analysis and financial analysis; or operations and project management. Other career fields are very dissimilar or require licenses, certifications, or specialized training. Regardless whether where you are going is similar to where you are now, the wording of the resume in terms of similar functions, common duties, and supportive accomplishments can help you make that switch.

Additionally, selection of information can make a significant impact on the effectiveness of the career-change resume. Often, the most important factor in information selection is what is excluded from the resume. When making a career change, it is very tempting to "throw in every fact" in hope that it will have some kind of impact in the mind of the reader. Unfortunately, the result tends to be opposite. Too much information overwhelms important facts and the reader has trouble seeing the real qualifications

in the "static". When constructing the career-change resume, consider information presented to the reader very carefully. You have a limited amount of space to make your argument and you don't want to waste it with irrelevant information that does not support your goal.

It's not just what you've done in your career; it's what you've achieved. When making a career shift, showing good performance can help you make the jump, even if the performance is not in your new career field. Skills will take you only so far and then it's more a matter of attitude, drive, and willingness to learn. You can show those traits by demonstrating how you've performed well in your career to-date. Employers are more likely to give an opportunity to someone who shows drive than someone who just shows skills on the resume.

Career-change resumes can be challenging to construct. Make sure you understand clearly what the requirements of your target job will be in terms of both hard skills and soft skills. Look at your experience clearly to identify what will transfer well. Identify points of achievement that demonstrate an attitude of ambition. Coalesce all this into a document that sells your performance while showing your transferrable skills and you will have a winning career-change resume.