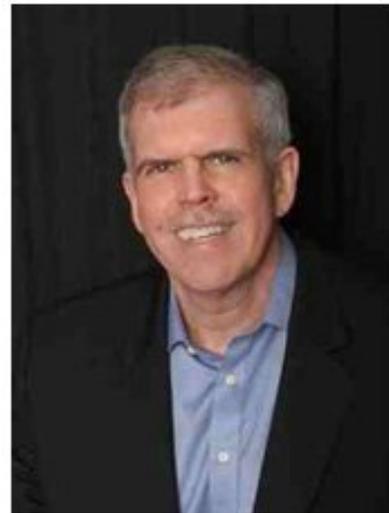


An Unfair Advantage?

How the "Resume Coach" Opens Doors for Job Seekers

- Why hire the "Resume Coach"? More job interviews!
- Like being coached by a personal trainer or a golf pro.
- How the [PAR](#) process prepares you for the interview
- How to use "social-networking" sites to bypass HR and reach hiring managers



Donald Burns
The 40+ Resume Coach

First, the good news. If you are well qualified and your resume has packaged you correctly, you'll be called in for an interview.

Sounds easy, right?

Unfortunately, every new posting on the Internet triggers a chaotic stampede of electronic job seekers. Even qualified people from top schools get trampled if they don't know how to package themselves on the small screen.

Your resume can make or break your career, so give it your best shot. Don't hinge your career on a do-it-yourself book or a cookie-cutter template from Monster.

If your resume has not been opening doors for interviews, maybe you don't know what the employer expects to see in a resume. Or maybe your resume is failing the 10-second "trash test" because you buried your golden nuggets where nobody can see them. Or maybe you're just not a skillful writer—maybe you're skilled in finance, illustration or some other area.

How a resume writer can help you get interviews, land a better job and promote your career

Your chances of writing an acceptable resume by yourself are pretty good—assuming you write well, read a good book on resumes and follow the advice given on this site.

But you'll get much better results if work with an outside writer. (To solve the resume riddle now and jump start your job search, please consider [Double Check!](#) or [Resume Makeover.](#))

If you've ever been coached by a golf pro or a personal trainer, you already know that a small investment in coaching can yield great results.

Or consider that old adage from ballroom dancing, "it takes two to tango." You can learn some basic dance moves by watching a DVD, but the best results come by practicing one-on-one with an instructor. I know this from firsthand experience.

Likewise, a resume coach can really help you when you get down to the nitty-gritty of the [PAR process and accomplishment statements](#). In fact that's the the strongest reason I can think of why you should hire me as your resume writer and coach.

Also, a resume coach helps you connect with a hiring manager by showing you where to send your resume, and how to use new social-networking sites such as LinkedIn (more on that in a moment).

Three ways a coach strengthens your resume during the writing process

- Blowing past procrastination

You might be losing precious time because you just don't feel like redoing your resume. Or maybe you don't know where to begin. Or you're not sure what an employer expects to see.

A writing coach can help you break through the "blank page" syndrome that is freezing you in your tracks. If you're stuck, I can jump start your process and get you back on track—pronto!

- Hard core editing, especially for the "40+" resume

If you've been working for more than 15 years, you've already accumulated a treasure trove of work experience, accomplishments and education.

But if you shoehorn all that information into your resume—as some people insist on doing—you are sabotaging your chances for a better job. An outside writer can help you select the most important gems and shape your history into two compelling pages. Or possibly taking all that information and then creating two resumes with separate objectives.

As a specialist in 40+ resumes, I've helped many people resolve their challenges with information overload. If your situation sounds similar, please send me an email.

- Objectivity

Often it's difficult to be objective about your own accomplishments. Most people understate their contributions and accomplishments—basically because they take themselves for granted. And people sometimes overstate aspects of their careers that might not be important from the point-of-view of a prospective employer.

An outside writer draws out and showcases your most important contributions and deemphasizes all the rest. You'll get a fresh perspective and an objective point-of-view from somebody who knows what employers expect to see on a resume.

What a writer cannot do for you

- No lying, stretching the truth, making stuff up—anything like that. It's an awful idea. You'll undermine your confidence during the interview. And sooner-or-later you'll get caught and we'll both look bad. That being said, I will play up your truthful material for maximum impact.
- Nobody can guarantee that you'll get a particular job, but I can guarantee that your resume will give you the best shot possible.

Stick a fork in it, your resume is done! Now where do you send it?

Are you aware there are newer, better ways to submit your resume and make sure that it gets delivered directly to a hiring manager? Have you ever heard of an "informational interview"? This topic circles back [Web 2.0 and the New Internet \(see article\)](#).

Here's another way that I can help you—especially if you're not familiar "social networking" sites such as LinkedIn. After we polish off your resume, we'll collaborate on your next steps using LinkedIn.

How the [PAR](#) process prepares you for the interview

The ideal resume will get you to the interview, and then help you succeed during the interview.

During resume development I play the devil's advocate. I look for holes in your story and challenge you on apparent weaknesses. Don't get mad at me—it's excellent preparation for the interview. As devil's advocate I'll ask you questions and challenge you just like the hiring manager will challenge you.

"I can't believe that's me"

When you first see your new resume, you might think "this doesn't sound like me—nobody will believe it." Many people say something like that when they go through the [PAR](#) process for the first time (or when they get plastic surgery).

Actually, every word is scrupulously accurate although you might be a little shocked by an outside writer's objective packaging of your personal history.

You've got a great story, and I'm a great storyteller.

After a while you'll absorb the new reality and your self image will shift. Happens all the time.

Your competitors are getting help with their resumes—why not you?

Nowadays we've got coaches and tutors and self-improvement gurus for every niche you can imagine: Personal fitness, weight loss, relaxation, relationships, careers, pets—you name it. Needless to say, resume writing and coaching has become "mainstream" for people who are serious about getting ahead in their careers.

Right now many of your competitors in the job market are getting expert coaching from individual resume writers, outplacement firms and resume experts working in colleges, military-transition centers and state employment agencies. They're all getting a competitive advantage—so why not you?

How the "New" Internet Is Changing the Rules of Job Hunting

Six Things You Must Do Now If You're Looking for a Better Job

Sometime in 2005—while you were busy and minding your own business—the “rules of the road” started changing for job hunters.

Now it's late 2008, the economy feels shaky and resumes are flooding the Internet. Unfortunately, many well-qualified people don't know about the new rules so their resumes are landing in the spam pile.

Don't let that happen to you!

BTW you probably won't see this information in a book on resume writing—you'll see bits and pieces, but I haven't seen any books that connect all the dots for you.

Three invisible obstacles you've probably never heard of

In the good old days—prior to, say, 2005—you needed only one basic resume. All you had to do was send your resume and a cover letter.

In 2008, that probably won't work. Now you must make sure that that you resume breaks through sophisticated spam filters. Otherwise nobody will even see it.

1. Advanced spam filters

For years, companies have had serious problems separating serious applicants from all the spam, so now they're using advanced software—Applicant Tracking systems—that pinpoint the “best” resumes for a particular position.

In other words, it's highly likely that your resume will be trashed if it does not exactly mirror the specs for a particular job (Ref 1).

2. OFCCP

If you submit your resume to a company with more than 50 employees, beware the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP).

Thanks to regulations enacted in 2006—over and above the existing EEOC regs—employers are protecting themselves by restricting the number of “active and qualified” applicants for each job posting (Ref 2).

3. Web 2.0 and the “new” Internet

The term Web 2.0 mostly refers to an Internet phenomenon that promotes information sharing, collaboration, and “social networking.”

Maybe you’ve never even heard of Web 2.0, but you’ve certainly seen examples of it all over the Internet, for example: Blogs, Wikipedia, and social networking sites like YouTube, LinkedIn, myspace, and facebook.

Web 2.0 is not quite an obstacle—it’s actually a trend that strongly favors job seekers who establish an “online identity” on the Internet.

In the “new” Internet era, social-networking sites like myspace and facebook are not just for kids anymore: Potential employers are using these sites to find top talent. So if you lack an online identity, you might be invisible to companies that are actively looking for somebody with your expertise (Refs 3 and 4).

You can't go wrong if you follow these six steps

While researching this article I had an opportunity to hear feedback from many experts including recruiters, HR people and my former colleagues at Bernard Hodes Advertising, an online-recruiting leader. You can't go wrong if you follow the six steps outlined below.

1. Send out a highly targeted resume for each job opportunity

The experts do not all agree on the impact of applicant spam filters, OFCCP and Web 2.0.

But they do agree that sending a highly targeted resume is a good idea no matter what the reason—and it so happens that a job-targeted resume is your best defense against OFCCP and the spam filters.

If you think that creating a hand-tailored, targeted resume involves some extra work—you're right! But you'll absolutely boost your chances of getting an interview (see the [Resume Makeover](#) section of this site).

2. Include a career summary at the top of your resume

Your resume's first critical element is a keyword-driven career summary.

Make sure you include a paragraph—near the top of your resume—that starts with the exact title that appears in the job spec, for example: “Senior marketing executive with 15 years global experience ...” Use bold formatting for the job title.

The resume experts agree that your summary paragraph is probably more important than any other element. You've got 10-15 seconds to make a favorable impression, so the summary can make-or-break you.

The resume experts don't all agree on the actual title of this section—"career summary" or "profile" or "objective" (more on this in a moment). But they DO agree that you should include a paragraph that summarizes your experience and clearly states what you're looking for.

A well written career summary pulls together all the elements of your resume, just like a strong magnet pulls metal shavings into alignment. Most important, it attracts the attention of a hiring manager, who'll invite you in for an interview.

Two points for your summary paragraph

- Use "objective" as the title when you're changing your career path. For example, if you've been a corporate controller for 10 years and now you're seeking a position as chief financial officer, you'd probably start your resume with a paragraph titled "Objective: Chief Financial Officer."
- If you've been a controller for 10 years and you're seeking a similar position, you'd probably start your resume with a paragraph titled "Career Summary" (or "Profile" or something similar). The first sentence starts "Controller with 10 years..." Make sure your summary starts with the exact title that appears in the job posting.

3. Describe your work experience in terms of accomplishments, not job descriptions

Here's the second critical element that can make-or-break your resume.

The "old style" resume was basically a job description. It listed things you did, but did not say how well you did them. Today's resume—the one that passes the 10-second "trash test"—showcases your accomplishments instead of job descriptions.

Maybe you're thinking "I can't think of any accomplishments." Lots of people say that because they take their contributions for granted (more on that in a moment).

Use the PAR format to showcase your experience

PAR stands for Problem --> Action --> Result. It's the "gold standard" for showcasing your experience. The PAR format (also called Challenge --> Action --> Result or "CAR") spotlights your results and accomplishments. Whatever you call it, use this format! See the [PAR](#) page for details.

What to do if you get stuck

Often it's difficult to recognize—and be objective about—your personal accomplishments.

If you're having difficulty writing accomplishment statements, ask an experienced writer to help you. A resume coach can draw out your truthful experience and shape it into a winning, proven format that gets you called in for more interviews ([Why Hire a Resume Writer?](#)).

4. Be Brief. And if you're over 40, be really brief (Are you a LIAR if you don't mention every job?)

Years ago I rewrote a resume for a former boss who insisted on listing every job since college. His resume droned on through four pages of boring, hard-to-read text.

He refused to cut anything—partly due to pride of accomplishment, and mostly because he is a scrupulously honest person who believes that leaving anything out is “lying by omission.” Wrong!

If you must show old-but-relevant experience, condense it into a short paragraph (for example, “Additional Experience: 1977-1990”).

Don't exceed two pages

Don't exceed two pages, no matter how substantial your experience (in academic settings, sometimes a third-page “addendum” is used for scholarly publications, patents and so on).

Limit your experience to 15 years for a managerial job and 10 years for a technical job. Make sure all your experience supports your job objective.

Lavishing too much attention on past jobs causes two problems:

- You've included way too much information, so your resume rambles and lacks focus. Worse, you're probably not supporting your summary/objective.
- Too much detail makes you look old (euphemistically, you're “over qualified” or “too expensive”).

Ever notice what happens when a 50+ gray-bearded man suddenly shaves off his beard? Everybody says, “Wow! You look 10 years younger!” Something similar happens when you cut your resume to two pages.

Here's another instance where a resume writer can help you. If you cannot bear to delete, edit and shape your work history into two pages, ask an outside writer to help you.

5. Use keywords and lively, power-packed action verbs. Write in a conversational style.

Writing a resume is easy. Getting somebody to actually READ it is the hard part.

Your resume's third critical element concerns word choices and writing style. Be wary of presenting a “boring” presentation (plodding, “dense” and overly formal). If the reader feels tired or bored your resume might get trashed.

The conversational style emphasizes active voice, simple words, simple declarative sentences, short bullets and short paragraphs—but never degenerates into slang or “vogue” words.

The page you're reading right now is written in a conversational “Web2.0 style,” and you're still reading, right?

A famous writing adage says "the easier it is to read, the harder it is to write!" Writing in a conversational style is a tricky balance—like dressing for "casual Fridays" in an office on Wall Street.

The conversational style is not even new. You can find all its principles in a slim, 90-page paperback called "The Elements of Style," originally published in 1918! (Ref 6).

Can your resume pass the barstool test?

Start by reading your resume out loud: If you sound like you're having an ordinary conversation with a person on the barstool beside you, you passed. But if you stumble, stutter, backtrack or hesitate—like most people who try this exercise—rewrite and try again!

6. Create an online identity that shows you're "with it"

If you're over 40, you're well aware of the stereotypes: "you can't teach an old dog new tricks; "older people can't handle new technology" and so on.

One way to counter these perceptions—and make yourself visible to savvy hiring managers who Google job candidates—is to create an online profile on LinkedIn and then post your resume there (Ref 11).

If you're really ambitious, create a profile on facebook or myspace. In the Web 2.0 world, job seekers, recruiters and employers are using these social-networking sites for job searching and recruiting.

Get your own Web site, stake your claim in cyberspace, and slice years off your virtual age

Nowadays it seems like every teenage kid has a blog or a Web site, but few people over 30 bother to stake their claim in cyberspace. One of the easiest ways to build your online identity is to post your resume on your own personal Web site (for example, www.MaryJSmith.com).

Having your own Web site says "I might look a little older, but I'm technically hip and savvy." You'll dazzle job interviewers and amaze your friends. And you'll have your own domain so people can easily look you up on the Web.

Setting up your personal Web site has never been easier. Let me guide you through the process, step-by-step. See [Your Own Website Tonight](#).

Recruiting Experts Suggest You Do Three Things—Even if You're Not Looking for a Job

1. Keep track of all your accomplishments on your current job

If fail to record your contributions and you're suddenly laid off, you'll probably forget useful material for your resume. So save your performance reviews and record all your accomplishments at your current job.

All the experts agree you should do this, because sooner or later you'll need a new resume that uses the accomplishments format (see [PAR](#)).

Also scan the job sites and create a few spinoff resumes—just in case. In a shaky economy, many people feel that this exercise helps calm the job jitters.

And ask a resume wrier to showcase your accomplishments. You'll feel like an artist has painted your portrait, and you'll be amazed how good you look!

2. Build your network of personal contacts

The most effective way to get a better job is through a human contact. The Internet is necessary, but human connections work better. And your human network isn't limited to your inner circle—each of your personal contacts has his or her own network that you can tap into.

Imagine throwing a rock into still water and watching the waves of concentric circles that expand outward. Your own network of personal contacts expands outward like those waves when you tap into "social networking" sites like myspace and LinkedIn.

3. Cultivate current and former job references and keep your list current

As their official policy, most companies will verify only your dates of employment. To get a useful personal reference, you must personally cultivate your current colleagues and bosses—and hope they back you up when you need them.

LinkedIn offers a handy way to showcase all your job references: Just ask former bosses and colleagues to give you an electronic "thumbs up." (You'll quickly find out who you're friends are!)

Some Resume Fads You Need Not Worry About—for Now

Every few years somebody says the traditional resume is about to be replaced by some high-tech upgrade like the video resume, the social networking resume, or even the podcast resume.

As we say in Brooklyn, fugghedaboutit.

A traditional resume is still the power tool for your job search. Unless you are a Web designer, multimedia artist or a "digital snob," these high-tech formats won't apply to you in the foreseeable future. BTW video resumes are tedious to watch and inefficient. An employer can scan a printed resume in 10-15 seconds--it takes that long just to load a video on YouTube!

The Web 2.0 Resume, Marci Alboher, NY Times, March 10, 2008
<http://shiftingcareers.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/03/10/the-web-20-resume/>

How to Spiff Up Your Resume, Marci Alboher, NY Times, Nov 1, 2007
<http://shiftingcareers.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/11/01/how-to-spiff-up-your-resume/>

References for All Articles
<http://TruthsWellTold.com/FrontPageContinuation-1D>

References for Articles

Here are some useful Web sites, blogs, books and podcasts that focus on the job searching in the "new Internet" era:

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http://www.airsdirectory.com/mc/products_sourcepoint_guid

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<http://www.hodes.com/publications/podcasts/index.asp>

Ref 4. Bernard Hodes Group: Blogs on Web 2.0 and Recruiting
<http://www.bernardhodesgroup.com/publications/blogs/index.asp>

Ref 5. How to Tailor All Your Resumes CNN, April 2, 2008
http://www.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/worklife/04/02/taylor_resume/index.html

Ref 6: The Elements of Style
<http://www.amazon.com/Elements-Style-Fourth-William-Strunk/dp/020530902X>

Ref 7A: The Web 2.0 Resume, Marci Alboher, NY Times, March 10, 2008
<http://shiftingcareers.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/03/10/the-web-20-resume/>

Ref 7B: How to Spiff Up Your Resume, Marci Alboher, NY Times, Nov 1, 2007
<http://shiftingcareers.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/11/01/how-to-spiff-up-your-resume/>

Ref 8. Resumes for Dummies, Joyce Lain Kennedy, Fifth Edition (Wiley, 2007)
<http://www.dummies.com/WileyCDA/DummiesTitle/Resumes-For-Dummies-5th-Edition.productCd-047008037X.html>

Ref 9. Gerry Crispin's Blog on Recruiting Trends
<http://www.careerxroads.com>

Ref 10. Joel Cheesman's Blog on Search Engines and Recruiting
<http://www.cheezhead.com>

Social Networking Sites

Ref 11: LinkedIn
<http://www.linkedin.com>

Ref 12: myspace
<http://www.myspace.com>

Ref 13: facebook
<http://www.facebook.com>