

4 MISSION-CRITICAL RÉSUMÉ STRATEGIES FOR SENIOR-LEVEL EXECUTIVES

Growing up, many of us frequently heard that it was rude to ‘*toot your own horn*’ and impolite to brag; so, strategizing an effective résumé can be difficult for most of us. Consequently, trying to sell top-quality capabilities to a prospective employer makes us feel like we are bragging; therefore, we tend to undersell our value. We get hung up in the perceived societal rules. Additionally, we hear that about the need to incorporate “the proper” key words, but what are they? Who decides which ‘buzz’ words are the most effective, and which ones just don’t really work well?

If you’re an executive (or aspire to become one), you have an additional challenge, and it’s not a small one: You’ve got to *properly image the level of your résumé* so that you can play ball in the big leagues.

It’s not an easy task, but if you’re heading for the executive suite, here are a few reasonably simple strategies that will help you ***position yourself to maximum advantage and outperform your competition.***

1. Create an Executive Summary

If you’re already at the executive level, replacing your earlier objective, as a résumé starter, is long overdue. Think about it! The higher-hiring authorities want to know who you are (*and what you can do for them*); **NOT** what you hope to become.

Yes, yes, we know. You’re a peak-performing, results-oriented achiever with a demonstrated track record of success who is looking for a rewarding opportunity in a growing organization that values its personnel. *Couldn’t that describe just about anybody?* At the executive level, your best strategy is to aggressively sell WHO YOU ARE and WHAT YOU CAN DO rather than stating *what you are looking for*. An OBJECTIVE statement is probably better left to a recent grad or a career changer. At the executive level, your résumé needs to launch with a hard-hitting

summary that positions you as “*just what the doctor ordered*” for the type of roles you’re pursuing. And let’s face it; they really don’t care what you want or are looking for. The hiring authorities’ organizations have challenges to face and problems to solve. You need to present yourself as just what they need.

Begin your résumé with a *POSITIONING STATEMENT* (*what’s your brand?*) and then showcase a number of bullet points that highlight your superior and unique sales proposition / unique selling points (or, as we call it, “*nuggets of solid gold*”) as related to the target job. For instance, if you’re gunning for a COO role within the manufacturing sector, you certainly may benefit from positioning yourself as an expert in agile methodology and one who has driven significant growth or revenue results. Or, if you know that the organization you’re targeting is struggling, you may want to position yourself as a turnaround specialist (assuming you *are* one).

This is your *PRIME RÉSUMÉ REAL ESTATE*. In the newspaper business, the most important stories always begin ‘*above the fold*.’ Do your key selling up-front and fast; deliver your critical messages before losing the reader’s attention (yeah, the phone is going to ring) and having your résumé end up in the circular file. Now’s your chance to position yourself as a “*just what the doctor ordered*” obvious fit for your next leadership role. Make the most of your executive positioning statement instead of including a *ho-hum* professional summary. Check out our how-to article: [Formula For Building A Selling Focus Statement or Summary](#).

2. Quickly Communicate Your Value:

Highlight The IMPACT of your Financial and Business Results

While qualitative results are nice—and can certainly help the reader get a sense of what kind of professional you are—decision makers, working to fill executive spots, are looking for **impact**. You are not likely to land an executive role for simply being a good person. You’re going to get hired to make money, drive growth, reduce costs, streamline operations, optimize staff performance, build market share, and, well, ‘bring home the goods’.

The best way to make it instantly clear that you are an expert at doing this is to **deliver the results**. “*The proof is in the pudding*.” Show the numbers. One of the simplest ways to accomplish this is by creating a sub-section within each (relevant) job you’ve held called “Selected Accomplishments” or “Key Achievements.” Make it impossible for the reader to **not miss** your key quantifiable accomplishments. Make the achievement, and especially the numbers jump off of the page!

3. Include a Qualifications Section (That Literally Broadcasts “Executive”)

Here’s your opportunity to make your résumé KWS: KEY WORD SEARCHABLE; enabling your document to ‘gain points’ for relevancy and ‘move to the top of the stack.’ Here’s the key words conversation that everyone always wants to have. Now, I’m going to argue that, if you’re an executive, you probably should not be spending much time

applying for jobs blindly via online applications. You should be networking. But even if key words aren't critical from the standpoint of the résumé scanning {ATS} software, you still need them. **You need to showcase core proficiencies that speak to your demonstrated executive capabilities.**

While your strengths in spreadsheets and staff supervision may be important, these are not necessarily executive-level areas of expertise. Instead, focus on strengths such as change management, process reengineering, global strategy, employee development, mergers & acquisitions, and P & L, for example. Place these in a standalone section (called: "KEY QUALIFICATIONS"; "AREAS OF EXPERTISE"; "SIGNATURE SKILLS & COMPETENCIES"; or even "CORE PROFICIENCIES") right under your executive positioning statement. And then, if you have technical skills that you feel are still vital to your future role? Note them near the end of your résumé in a section titled "Technical Skills."

4. Choose Highlights That Really Mesh With Your Targeted Job

By the time you get to executive level, you undoubtedly have quite a bit to be proud of professionally. You probably have a multitude of accomplishments that you are (*justifiably*) dying to share. But it's important that you **don't cram non-relevant achievements** into your executive résumé. This is NOT your *career* autobiography, it's a marketing document. It's a marketing tool you're using to attract a specific audience and successfully engineer a desirable RESULT. With that said, you should share the career highlights that best align with the qualifications required for the roles you're targeting. Eliminate the fluff, and leave off the achievements that just aren't relevant to your next role. It can be extremely difficult eliminating something that was very important to YOU. Even though you feel 'married' to a particular set of accomplishments, just remember the vital focus of your marketing document and then ask yourself, "**How will it play to the targeted audience?**" "In what way will it show that I am better qualified than the next applicant?" This is the key determinant in deciding what is eliminated from; and what gets to stay on your résumé. Additionally, never forget that there is a huge difference between 'telling' and 'selling'.

If you're ready to play in the big leagues, make sure that you give yourself a solid advantage at the front end.

Make darn certain that you **LOOK THE PART.**

If you feel that you're not up to the task, see how [Career Development Resources](#) can put our expertise and 35+ years of experience to the task of engineering your career advancement campaign by calling us at: **(910) 833-5013**

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