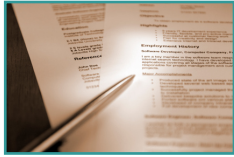




TECH JOB FEATURE



## How to Create a Tech Resume in a Dwindling Job Market

[By Ervin Frenzel]

*Due to the looming recession, tech jobs are harder to come by than they previously were. Furthermore, with so many jobs moving across international borders, finding employment in the United States is becoming more difficult. The following article discusses how to compose an effective tech resume that will improve your marketability in the current economic climate.*

In the recent past if you wanted a job, you would simply send out resumes until you got what you wanted or at least something comparable. In today's market, however, that is no longer the case; your resume now has to target a specific sector or job in a way that moves it to the top of the interviewer's stack. You need to ensure that you have not only the hard skills that scream, "I am a professional," but also the soft skills that say, "I can work as a team player and work for and keep customers for the company." You also need to be well rounded and, sometimes, well connected. These qualities will improve your chances of landing a job.

So what does all of this mean? For the technology sector it means that the future techie doesn't merely have professional skills; he or she has the written, people, and technological skills that the market demands. Some of the most basic communication skills that so many of us tend to ignore are, quite simply, some of the most important.

James Manktelow of [MindTools.com](http://MindTools.com) has a page of really exceptional concepts regarding how to handle the grammatical aspect of writing without having to be a subject matter expert. This listing is on a [webpage](#) titled "Writing Skills: Before You Write It Down, Know This" under the subheading "The Importance of Careful Proofing."

It is really worth your time to invest in a little retraining to gear up for your next step. So many times debates arise over whether techies need certifications, experience, college, or a mix of all of the above. The answer is rather complex: a techie needs none of these things and all of them.

That being said, it is best to accurately identify what makes you a viable technician. For example, if you have had excellent rapport with "Mr. Smith" but had horrible rapport with your other references, limit the amount of talk on your resume about "excellent people skills." If you have had 100% customer satisfaction with all of your customers, then you want to talk that up. You should also include why you were so successful with these candidates.

The first real test of your resume is its ability to convey to your audience what you can do. If your grammar and usage are bad, then you might want to have a friend or trusted colleague proofread whatever you put down on paper to ensure that it is legible, concise, and accurate. If you cannot write well enough to convey your meaning to your audience, then consider investing in a writing course at a local community college. Additionally, make sure that your resume is proofread as this is the document that will make your first impression on people who must decide if they want you on their team.

If you have to work on these areas, say so on your resume; this not only helps your cause but also shows potential employers that you take your career seriously enough to work on weak areas. Many times a good technician with poor communication skills meets his or her demise over not being able to explain what is happening to a customer, while an average technician excels because he or she can explain what is going on in such a way that the customer immediately realizes the value of what is being said.

There is no real way to document people skills other than to have experience showing that you handled complex interpersonal situations well, and this is normally spread through word of mouth. You need to find references who truly believe that you have provided them good service without going overboard and embellishing your skills. Start with your references page when writing your resume. Many times your references will tell you what your strong points are, and they might even be willing to give you job leads.

Show your references that you are trustworthy and grateful enough to truly value them. You also need to ensure that references are actually willing to attest to your skills without holding it against you. For instance, your current boss might not be a good reference if he or she is afraid of losing you. Your boss might even fire you for looking for a better job.



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A recent [article](#) by Jane MacKenzie titled “How Do I Write a Reference Page for a Resume” states:

Finally, to answer the question of “How do I write a reference page for a resume?” we cannot leave out the last fundamental point: make sure you contact the referees beforehand to let them know they may receive contact from potential employers. This ensures they have time to think about what to say; it also gives the opportunity to gauge if they will give you a good reference.

Basically, is the person willing to help you, or will his or her help actually hurt you? You would much rather be employed and looking for a better job than unemployed and looking for a job.

The next major point also relates to your references. If you have really strong references, then you might have a little more room to expand on things other than pure work history. If you don’t have strong references, then you may want to look into certifications to carry you through, so to speak. It is normally best to have both, as a recent [CertCities.com](#) forum [post](#) by “TranscenderMike” points out. Sometimes the little differences can mean the difference between employed and unemployed. Sometimes it is down to the wire, and anything that makes you shine helps your cause.

There is now a very basic question for your resume to answer: “How much experience do you really have?” You do not want to get caught fudging on this as your resume will immediately go to the “do not interview” pile.

Even if a small fabrication does get you hired, you aren’t out of the woods. In an [article](#)

published by Keith J. Winstein and Daniel Golden, MIT Chancellor Phillip Clay is cited as stating the following in reference to the dismissal of MIT Admissions Dean Marilee Jones: “We take integrity very seriously, and it was on that basis that as soon as we determined that these facts were not true we dismissed her even though she has done a great job.” This should demonstrate how important not exaggerating anything on your resume is. After all, if it can haunt a dean, it can haunt the rest of us.

Don’t be afraid to build up the experience section of your resume by talking about your early minimum wage jobs. However, a word of caution: as you get more experience, you will need to start focusing your experience in a specific area. Technology has many applications, and people who interview you will want to know that you have pertinent skills.

An additional aspect to consider is whether the experience shown on your resume builds upon itself. For instance, if you say you were a desktop help technician and then went directly into a chief web designer position, employers will get suspicious.

Also, make sure you don’t appear overqualified for the job at hand. If you are applying for an entry-level position and you have five years of experience, you might want to tone down how much experience you actually have. The hiring manager may feel threatened if you are too good, especially if he or she doesn’t have the same qualifications or experience that you do.

Again, don’t draw the wrong type of attention to your resume. For those without experience the next best thing is certification. Especially for entry-level positions, certification is a must.

However, be wary of “boot camps” (schools that guarantee certifications after taking their courses). Because they are not created equally, some come with unconditional certification pass guarantees, but you may not really know what you have just learned, especially if you have no working knowledge to assist you in applying new skills. You may be able to regurgitate facts but have no practical skills relevant to your knowledge.

Choose your certifications based on where you want to go with your profession. A Cisco networking certification doesn’t make sense if you want to program Java applications for the rest of your life or vice versa. It is important to note, though, that some certifications have pretty much become standard requirements, such as the CCNA (Cisco Certified Network Associate) and the CompTIA (Computing Technology Industry Association) A+.

In a recent [CertMag.com](#) [article](#), Ben Warden cites a tech forum poster named “Kieran” as stating:

If you were looking for the CCNA to get you the job, then I’m afraid you will almost certainly be disappointed. Where the CCNA once made a person stand out, it’s now a requirement to simply be on par with many other people. If you truly have 10 years of solid IT experience, get it down on your resume in a way that impresses. That should get you interviews. The CCNA will look good in addition to that.

One of the final arguments pertains to whether you should list information about college on a resume. The simple answer is “Only if it directly applies to what you want to do and would put you above other candidates.” You also might simply state



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that you received a Bachelor of Arts degree from University X instead of stating that you received a Bachelor of Arts in Basket Weaving from University X. A good example illustrating the fine line of distinction is a degree in nursing, which may not really be pertinent in, say, a web design field but may be extremely pertinent for a career in medical technologies.

Again, avoid portraying yourself as overqualified. You don't want to seem like a

threat to your potential manager or, for that matter, your potential employer. Focus their attention on what they really need to see and what you really need to show them, like the fact that you have a bachelor's degree in web design. This would be excellent for someone who is looking for an entry-level web programmer job.

Your resume should entice potential employers by demonstrating what you have to offer. It should show them your people

skills, writing skills, and tech skills. An ideal resume will appear professional and be informative but also have a personal touch that keeps prospective employers interested. It has the ability to concisely relay all of your pertinent skills, knowledge, certifications, and experience to those who matter the most.

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