

CAREER CORNER

NEWS ARTICLES & OTHER JOBSEARCH TIPS AND IDEAS WRITTEN BY EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD

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resume

Critiquing

"Judgment Day"



Does Your Resume Rate With the Best?

Send it in to find out.

Click [here](#) to view
February's
Resume.

Once a month, legal professionals will put their cover letters and resumes against a panel of career counselors. The counselors will rate each cover letter and resume between *one and five gavels, five being the best*. Their comments on the resume are listed below.

E-mail: ResumeCritiquing@LBPC.com

(Your name, contact info, places of employment will remain confidential)

The Critiques:

Curtis Linder's Resume Critique



Ah, February. The last month of winter (we hope). Valentine's Day. Chicago Restaurant Week. The Westminster Kennel Club dog show for two glorious nights of must-see TV. And the month with all those birthdays. I bet you have 34 friends and relatives with birthdays this month. And also this month - a resume created by another person who seems to like centered text. It is documented that centered text is more difficult to read. But let us also keep in mind this: "Right and wrong do not exist in graphic design. There is only effective and non-effective communication," Peter Bilak - of Illegibility. Not that a resume should fall within the umbrella of graphic design - but many I see come very close. We now see graphs and pie charts on more and more resumes, which I am starting to like. But usually not on lawyer or paralegal resumes. So as we view this resume on the printed pages(s), we also catch some awfully (as in exaggerated, not as in awful) narrow page margins. About one quarter inch on the left and perhaps a half inch on the right. Top and bottom too. And with the text also set as Right Justified - the author is not doing the reader any favors. But the document does excel in a number of areas. Page one and page two are properly balanced. And his Profile (bold, centered, and set in italics) is strong and persuasive. But the text is set at 10 point. Given how dense this two-page resume is - my suggestion is: make it three pages. Loosen up the page margins, bring the font up to 12 and give the reader some white space on the page. As is, this is a 3 gavel resume.

Curtis Linder, President and Owner Linder Legal Staffing Inc.

Chere Estrin's Resume Critique



I had to put on some reading glasses and I don't wear reading glasses. Here's a good resume with some formatting problems. The summary should be cut down and not quite so effusive. After all, you are talking about yourself. The margins are too narrow and combined with the very small font, makes the reading difficult. Even an 11 pt. would be better than the 10 given the amount of information. When the reading is difficult, people tend to scan more quickly than normal. Cut down on the number of words - summarize it more succinctly - to give the needed white space. While most people dislike the three page resume, this may be an exception. Centering the education is a distraction. Education generally is placed last unless you want to cover up a work history that shows job hopping. All in all, this is a good resume. Best of luck in your new adventure! Without minor changes, this resume rates 3 gavels.

Chere Estrin, Chairperson Board of Directors, The Organization of Legal Professionals

Jean Krypton-Durham's Resume Critique



The February resume is good and I like the Profile. However, the profile could be cut down in order to simplify the resume. You get a real sense of who the candidate is. I would question the Legal Consultant 2011 and why that is first and why it is just not a part of his private practice experience. Was this something that was done in 1 month or for a year. Why was it important to lay it out first? As far as his education and continuing education, I would move that to after the experience. Also, he could consider taking off all of the continuing education and other experience and having it on a separate page. If the new position reflected the continuing education and/or the other experience, it could be made known. I would go with 3 gavels and with a new layout could be a 5.

Jean Krypton-Durham, President, Jean Krypton, Inc.

Continued on next Page.

Nancy Glazer's Resume Critique



Thank you for resubmitting your resume to us. I'm glad you took me up on the suggestion for a re-write.

Reading Chere and Curtis' critiques, I admit it. I'm the culprit. Perhaps it's just a healthy example of agreeing to disagree, BUT I like a 0.5 inch margin all the way around a resume. I think I suggested to our brave resume-submitter that he do that. WHY?

1. A slimmer margin subconsciously tells the reader -- someone who doesn't know you at all -- that you are a busy, accomplished person with many professional experiences to share; and
2. It gives you more room on the page(s) to encapsulate what you know how to do and what your successes are.

I will absorb the fault on that one. I love a slimmer margin. Okay, let's look at your revisions:

- Second line, no comma needed after analytic skills, and it is "analytic" not "analytical."
- "Combine analysis ..." Cut "Outstanding."
- "Knowledgeable" cut "Educated"
- Cut "Willing to start at the bottom" on many levels. You don't need to stoop down; bring others up to your level instead. If they don't want a senior person, they won't hire you. Period. Makes you look too desperate. Usually, a prospective employer wants what she wants.
- Second paragraph: "Attention ... " is not parallel with "discovers, removes or minimizes"
- Your Education section gets moved -- Legal Experience first (you can throw your clerkships at the end of this section. Education is second (or third if you keep section 2). Continuing Education is 4th, Bar Admissions is fifth and Community is last.
- In Education, just simply write: "J.D., 2001"
- Concentration in Health Law (did you get a certificate? Can you add another bullet about something you did in law school, too?)
- I would probably switch the order of your private practice and your work with HSBC Technology. I know why you did this - because you think HSBC sounds more prestigious? That may be, but you did this work back in 2011. For this bullet, cut "Strategically." How does someone strategically review? "Reviewed ... and counseled"
- Your private practice section needs to be beefed up. This is where you've been working for 5 years -- it's your meat and potatoes. In your bullets -- throughout the remainder of the resume -- you need to combine your bullets with the descriptions of what you did in the descriptions before your bullets. No one reads through paragraphs anymore. Period. Combine your 2 sections for each position. Describe your successes in each bullet and what you did. Show off. You've got it so flaunt it. Don't just summarize what you did with your paragraphs. Tell me why I should hire you. What makes you a winner? WHY YOU?
- In your Polk section, start with "Oversaw negotiation and; received exceptional performance reviews as a result."
- Float your bar admissions, etc to the left; same with your community work.

It's great you re-submitted your resume to us. You clearly are open-minded and maybe a glutton for punishment! In looking at both your resume from October and this one, you clearly have made great strides. It's still not quite there. I gave you 2 gavels in the fall. Like Chere and Curtis, I will give you 3 gavels now.

Thank you again for your persistence and your courage.

Nancy Mackevich Glazer, Esq., Manager, Legal Launch, LLC

Sarah Haley's Resume Critique



The "profile" section should only be included if it is targeted, lists tangible accomplishments, and articulates information that is not readily apparent elsewhere on application materials. This profile (which should be called "summary of qualifications," or a title relevant to a specific position) seems to target both law firms and corporations. I recommend avoiding dramatic language such as "vast," "extraordinary," and "outstanding," because it does not sound believable (those attributes can be shown through employer recognition, promotions, references, etc.). The verb tense sometimes changes and I have trouble following the sentence "used to counsel clients" - does that mean "familiar with" or "formerly"?). Remove the sentence beginning "willing to start at the bottom . . ." This gives the wrong impression to a potential employer. If the candidate feels overqualified, address in the cover letter why that is not an issue.

The next section should be legal experience, followed by education (education goes first only for law students and recent graduates). If the "continuing education" section is included to indicate interest in healthcare, that should be apparent from the heading, and that section can be condensed, perhaps by using two columns (CLE courses should never take up 1/3 of a page). Pre-JD experience can be omitted. The bar admission section should have dates. The second page should have a page number. The descriptions in the experience section should have consistent formatting (paragraphs or bullets, but not both). Bullet points are easier for the reader. Since resumes are scanned during a first review, it needs to be easy for the reader to quickly grasp the candidate's background. Do not make the employer dig to find accomplishments, especially if they relate to healthcare.

Sarah Haley, Associate Director Career Services at The John Marshall Law School