

Can Résumé Writing Be Just As Effective Online As Face-To-Face?

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Speaking from five years of personal experience I can say, "Absolutely!" Résumé writing is an ideal virtual work at home business.

A 'virtual' service or business is one conducted via the Internet, email, fax, snail mail, phone – however you prefer other than face to face. Résumé writing is absolutely ideal as an online career.

Over the years I have compiled résumés for clients in the U.S.A., Canada, the Maldives, Singapore, East Yemen, India, Hong Kong and in numerous states throughout Australia. Very rarely has there been any voice contact, all documents have been compiled solely using a questionnaire, yet the standard of documents have consistently been high even on the first draft, with client satisfaction and success also high.

Résumé writing is perfect for those wanting to operate a home-based, virtual business and can seem like an easy home based business idea. You can use a computer, you know how to lay out a document and can spell, therefore you can write a résumé. True, you can. But if you want to start your own business writing résumés that stand out from everybody else's – and if you want to do it without even meeting your clients - then there are a few points to take note of.

When Starting A Small Business, Always Get Professional Help and Advice

Firstly, you need to consider the business aspect. This is after all, a business and it is essential you gain a strong understanding of how to start a business.

Identify a home-based business resource or small business consultant or support group who can give you business planning assistance and guidance in researching, formulating and writing a business and marketing plan.

Don't ever be afraid to ask for help or even ongoing support – after all, you want to be sure your new and exciting venture will be one of the 20% small business success stories and not one of the 80% that fold within the first few years.

Ok, so you have considered that this is a business you will be starting up and that you need help, but ...

How Do You Operate As A 'Virtual' Or 'Online' Résumé Writer?

Once again there is a 'firstly'. Firstly, you need to have developed computer skills, particularly in MS Word and in an email program, good spelling and grammatical skills and a solid understanding of sentence construction, a willingness to think outside the square and a passion to work with your clients to achieve the best possible result.

When working 'virtually', the questionnaire – the document you provide your client to answer and return to you – is the most critical point in the process. This document must ask the right kind of questions to prompt the client's memory and to challenge him or her to think about themselves and their career, or personal, history differently.

The questionnaire must not only extract information on duties performed, it must also 'drag out' actual achievements including facts and figures and the why and how behind each of these achievements. It is not good enough to state on a résumé merely the duties performed, or even that the client had boosted sales by 50%, how they boosted sales and if there were any challenging circumstances must also be included.

Questions such as these will prompt a client to think beyond the obvious:

1. Tell me about your communication skills and give examples of when they made a difference:
2. Tell me about successful presentations you have made:
3. List your achievements in this position considering – problems you have solved, contributions and impact you have made, awards and recognitions:
4. How did your performance compare to others in a similar position?:

Particular questions such as question 3 will bring out a wide array of information to be worked into your documents.

But it is not just the cold hard facts that need to be captured on paper. Even more than the résumé, the cover letter is the first point of contact and MUST reflect the job seekers suitability for the role, AND also reflect his or her personality, passion and work ethos.

But how can you write a document that captures the essence of the individual when you haven't even met with that person. Once again – it is all in the questionnaire.

By asking questions such as these below you can find out so much about the person that can then be translated into a letter with a strong depth of character and ringing with enthusiasm:

1. What is it about this position that attracts you?:
2. Why do you wish to work for this company?:
3. What special skills or attributes do you bring to this role?:
4. Use single words or short sentences to describe YOU:
5. Describe your work ethic:
6. What do you really love about your work?:

From this information you can gain a wonderful perspective of the client. Then don't be afraid to directly use much of what they have said themselves (often just tidying up the grammar). By wherever possible keeping the client's own words you will be more perfectly capturing the essence of the person.

Always remember, when writing the cover letter it must reflect the person and the role. A trade or labouring position will not use the same tone, or words, or even font and layout that you would use for an accountant or a CEO. By using some of the individuals words you can further enhance the authenticity of the application.

So if a client ever asks you to make up a résumé for them – BTW, you must always insist on writing the cover letter also to achieve a more professional flow – then you can let them know with confidence that there is no need for them to make an appointment and waste time and money travelling to see you – they can do it all from the comfort of their own home, at their own pace.

Another of the advantages I have found in working this way, clients are prompted for information in an environment where they will most likely have the answers, and the time to break and go and find and look up the information you need. This makes the process much less stressful and more efficient.

And of course there are the added benefits to you:

- You can work as it suits you and not have to break off to conduct an interview with a client that may possibly be extremely long winded with unnecessary information.
- You can give better service by maximising your time on the actual compilation of the documents.
- If you are one of the working mums with small children still at home you can still work while the children play.
- You don't have to confine yourself to your immediate area but can work for clients around the world.

And with the professional resources available with professional organisations such as the Association of Online Résumé and Career Professionals (AORCP), when it comes to résumé writing, the world's your oyster.

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