



Checklist for selecting a professional resume writer

As a job candidate, you have a range of people available to help you write a resume. Like any service, whether its an accountant, doctor or hairdresser, it can be difficult to objectively compare because you don't get to see the results until after you have committed.

This article suggests 13 criteria you can use to select a résumé writer who is suitable for you.

Before you start: What level of service do you need?

You need to ask the first questions of yourself. Do you just need someone to present text you have already written? In this case you can be satisfied with a word processing service, and this is likely to cost less than \$100.

Do you need someone to write your resume from scratch, or substantially rewrite your existing resume? This

writer will need to gather information from you first. Prices are likely to vary according to your working experience. Writing a resume for someone with only a few years experience takes less time than for someone with decades of experience that needs to be focused into a few pages. This service may start at \$100 and go up to \$500 or even higher.

Are you looking for a complete career makeover, with counseling on careers that suit you, as well as interview training? A new resume is often part of this review. Prices vary widely, depending on the services within the package.

1. Business experience

Does the writer have relevant business experience? Have they been in a job where they were responsible for real results or do they have an HR or administration background? HR and admin people understand the *process* of recruitment but it takes a line manager to know how to impress the real decision maker. Ask the

resume writer the most senior role they have held. Ask how many staff they have hired and managed.

2. Marketing experience

Does the writer understand benefits and differentiation? Your resume has to sell you, so a writer who is happy just to type up a “shopping list” of your job titles, responsibilities and education will sell you very short. Give the writer a brief description of your background and ask them what they think your USP should be*. Ask if they have ever had a selling job.

3. Writing experience

Find out how many years they have been writing resumes. Also ask how long they have been writing *persuasive* business communications? Someone with advertising copywriting experience has much more relevant experience than someone writing reports or academic papers. Your RESUME is primarily a selling document to persuade an employer or recruiter to invite you for an interview.

4. Track record

How many years has their company been in the resume business? What experience do they have in writing résumé for people in your field? Is the writer a member of any professional associations that may indicate reputation or industry standing?

5. Information gathering process

How much effort will the writer make to understand your background, skills

and strengths? Will your strengths be apparent if they intend gathering this information by looking at your existing resume or having you fill in forms online? Will they rewrite what you give them or will they interview you in person, asking specific questions? Will that interview be over the phone or will they meet you in person?

6. Personal service

Does the writer provide their professional background on their website or are they anonymous? If the writer is unwilling to disclose their name and details, how reliable are they?

7. Testimonials and references

As well as testimonials on their website, can the writer provide you names and phone numbers of clients willing to speak to you about their experiences?

8. Language ability

A resume writer needs a wide vocabulary, and skill at presenting complex ideas clearly and succinctly. Being a native English speaker is not enough to be a good writer. Check their company’s home page for spelling and grammar errors.

9. Code of Ethics and privacy

Does the writer have a formal Code of Ethics? Of course, a writer isn’t unethical (for example, passing your personal information to mailing list companies, making false statements about themselves or you) for not

having this spelled out but it does indicate how professional they are.

Ask the writer's policy on protecting your personal information. Or simply ask if they own a shredder (they need one to adequately dispose of personal data).

10. Understanding modern recruitment technology

Ask about the recruiters' resume scanning processes and database search software. If they do not understand the issues with machine readable resumes, yours may not show up when recruiters are looking for someone just like you.

11. Drafts

Do you get to review a draft version of your resume or do you have to accept what they give you?

12. Guarantees

What warranties does the writer provide? Are they prepared to modify your resume if you get a negative response from a recruiter or employer?

Are any guarantees realistic? Be suspicious if the writer offers guaranteed job interviews. Without doubt, a great resume helps you get an interview but you still need the experience and qualifications required. Because this is outside the resume writer's control, most guarantees come with conditions regarding the number of applications you need to send out. Are there 10 jobs per month in your field?

Alternatively, the writer might be in league with a recruiter who brings you in for one interview but without a real job.

13. Price

Ask what you get for the price. Do you get personal service or is it all via email? Does it include a cover letter or other services? How long does the process take? Do you have to pay extra for a electronic version you can edit yourself in future, or for printouts and binding? Is there a cover page? How many copies do you get?

Do you have to pay upfront? What payment methods are available? Does the price include appropriate taxes?

These questions will help you be clear about the nature of the resume writing service offered, and better judge the price and value.

**USP means Unique Selling Point*

© Successful Resumes America 2010



<http://www.successfulresumesamerica.com>