The

RÉSUMÉ DOCTOR

HOW TO TRANSFORM

A TROUBLESOME

WORK HISTORY INTO

A WINNING RÉSUMÉ

John J. Marcus

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THE RÉSUMÉ DOCTOR

To Rosanna, whose life reads like a perfect résumé.

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"The man who is prepared has his battle half fought."
—Cervantes, Don Quixote

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PREFACE

I entered the employment business in September 1968. My career has included performing contingency recruiting for Fortune 500 companies, executive search work, outplacement counseling, and career counseling in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, and Sarasota, Florida.

For the past fifteen years, I've concentrated on career counseling. I assist clients in determining the best position to pursue and how to get the right interviews, then convert them into offers. One of my key services is creating an outstanding résumé.

Obviously, I've written an enormous number of résumés. Throughout the years, I've heard the same plea time and again from a wide variety of clients:

"John," they tell me, "I'm really good at what I do, but my background has a few problems in it. I'm much better at my work than my résumé reads. If I could only get the right interviews, I know I could get the offer I'm looking for. Can you fix my résumé so I look as strong as I really am?"

I give my clients exactly what they want, and there's nothing fancy, tricky, or complicated about it.

How I turn a troublesome work history into a terrific, honest résumé is what *The Résumé Doctor* is all about. My goal is to teach you—someone who's seeking interviews and offers—how to write a résumé that you'll be proud of . . . one that will give you confidence as a job hunter and, more important, enable you to land the position you want.

The Résumé Doctor is of value to everyone, regardless of their level of seniority or personal circumstances—the first-time job seeker, the individual in midcareer, the person seeking to make a career change, the job hunter pursuing advancement in the same field, and the housewife desiring to enter or return to the work force.

To avoid awkwardness, I've written this book using masculine pronouns. The content pertains equally, of course, to men and women.

When referring to prospective employers, I often use the word company. It applies to any kind of organization that could possibly hire

you—organizations such as a business, an educational institution, a medical practice or facility, a law firm, a social services or charitable organization, or the government.

I wish you the best of luck with your résumé and your search for employment. I hope you have as much success in finding the position you want as I have had enjoyment in writing *The Résumé Doctor* for you.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments		
Preface	xv	
Chapter One—The Key Components of A Résumé	1	
The Purpose of Your Résumé	2	
Job Objective	4	
The Profile	7	
Education	9	
Work Experience	15	
Chapter Two—Overcoming Problem Areas	23	
Number One: A History of Unrelated Positions	23	
Number Two: Lacking the Experience That a Position		
Traditionally Requires	29	
Number Three: Undergoing a Recent Decrease in Responsibility	34	
Number Four: Having an Embarrassing Position on Your Résumé	40	
Number Five: Having Several Periods of Unemployment in		
Your Work History	46	
Number Six: A Record of Job-Hopping	52	
Number Seven: Being Unemployed	58	
Number Eight: Nearing Retirement Age	64	
Drawbacks to the Functional Format	79	
Chapter Three—The Secondary Sections	81	
Professional Organizations	81	
Community Activities	82	
Honors and Awards	83	

Licenses and Certifications	84
Patents	84
Publications	84
Foreign Languages	85
Computer Skills	85
Part-Time Jobs and College Work Experience	86
Hobbies and Interests	86
Military Experience	86
Personal Data	88
CHAPTER FOUR—PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER	89
The First Draft	90
The Chronological Format	91
The Functional Format	96
Things to Avoid	97
Résumé Length	101
Résumé Appearance	110
CHAPTER FIVE—SPECIAL TIPS, SPECIAL SITUATIONS,	
AND SPECIAL JOB HUNTERS	116
Special Tips	116
The Profile	116
Convey Multiple Strengths	117
Convey Qualifications for a Diverse Job Objective	119
Highlight Key Background Information	123
Highlight Early Work Experience	127
Highlight Important Personal Qualities	130
The Objective/Profile Combination	132
Special Situations	134
Honors and Awards	134
The Fact That You've Been Recruited	137
Letters of Recommendation	140
Customers' Comments	142
Untraditional Statements	144
Personal Information	149
Prestigious Companies	151
A Progression of Increasingly Responsible Positions	154
Repetitive Positions	157
Special Job Hunters	161
The Career Changer	161
When to Highlight Your Education and Not Your Work Experience	
When to Highlight Your Key Skills and Strengths	163

Contents	хi

When to Highlight Volunteer and Community Activities	165
Career Change and Concealing Your Age	170
The "Partial" Career Changer	173
The Graduating Student	179
The Housewife Reentering the Work Force	183
CHAPTER SIX—COVER LETTERS	187
Cover Letter for an Unsolicited Résumé	188
Composing the Cover Letter	188
Cover Letter for Responding to Newspaper Ads	196
Cover Letter for Contacting Executive Search Firms	199
Cover Letter for Contacting Employment Agencies	201
Cover Letters for Networking	201
Chapter Seven—The Résumé-Letter	204
Analysis of the Résumé-Letter and How to Compose It	206
Success-Rate of the Résumé-Letter	208
Chapter Eight—Where to Go with Your Résumé	210
Personal Contacts	210
Editors of Newsletters	211
Prospective Employers	212
Companies Advertising Job Openings	214
Professional Organizations	214
Executive Search Firms	214
Employment Agencies	216
Résumé Databases	216
On-Line Job-Listing Services	218
Index	219

CHAPTER 1

THE KEY COMPONENTS OF A RÉSUMÉ

Fantastic! The manager you want to interview with just picked up your résumé. You really want this job! Okay, he's reading your résumé. . . . Hey, what went wrong? He just glanced at it—no more than 10 to 15 seconds—then tossed it in the reject pile.

What happened? You thought you had a great shot at that job because you have the right experience.

Well, I'll tell you what happened: a land mine in your background just exploded and shattered your chances of getting the interview.

If you're not setting up the appointments you want and expect, then your résumé probably has something in it that's working against you and turning interviewers off.

When employers initially read résumés, they look for reasons *not* to interview people as much as reasons *to* interview them. In a mere 10 to 15 seconds, they decide whether to put the résumé in the reject pile or to consider it further.

One major negative point can eliminate a candidate who has the exact experience an employer is looking for. The fact that so many people have problem areas in their background is one reason why companies invite in for interviews only one applicant for every 245 résumés that they receive!

Some job hunters are aware that there's a glaring shortcoming in their background. Others are not. Regardless of which group you fall into, wouldn't you like to know how to evaluate your background and résumé with a new, trained eye? Wouldn't you like to be able to write your résumé so it doesn't work against you? Isn't it time your résumé stopped acting as your own worst enemy?

In *The Résumé Doctor*, you'll learn what the eight biggest problem areas are to guard against. You'll know how to eliminate them from your résumé or minimize the impact they have on prospective employers. In addition, you'll learn how to showcase your strengths and successes so that your capability jumps off the page.

The net result will be that your résumé will give people every reason to interview you and no reason to pass you by. You will enjoy new confidence about your background and abilities as a job hunter, generate a maximum number of interviews, and feel more relaxed and self-assured when being evaluated by prospective employers. As a result, you'll land the job you want.

Now that you know where you'll end up after having read *The Résumé Doctor*, let's start at the beginning to see how to get there.

THE PURPOSE OF YOUR RÉSUMÉ

Your résumé has only one purpose: to present your qualifications in such a convincing way that prospective employers arrange interviews with you. Your résumé isn't supposed to be your life story and tell employers everything about you. Instead, its mission is to concentrate on the work part of your life and enable you to get the interviews you want.

If you know what kind of work you want to do, then your résumé will highlight the most relevant parts of your experience and convey your capability in that area.

If you don't have a particular position in mind and are wide open to a variety of jobs, then you'll describe your greatest strengths and achievements in order to demonstrate your ability to hold a number of different positions.

In both of these cases, however, you'll be delving into your background and deciding what it is that you want to emphasize about yourself on your résumé.

From a résumé-writing standpoint, your *background* consists of the work you may have decided you want to do plus all the different areas in your life experience that could possibly contain important information for employers to have about you. These include your:

Job Objective

Education

Professional Work Experience

Professional Organizations

Community Activities

Volunteer Positions

Part-time Jobs

College Work Experience

Honors and Awards

Licenses

Certifications

Inventions and Patents

Publications

Foreign Languages

Computer Skills

Hobbies and Interests

Military Experience

Personal Data

These parts of your background form the different sections of your résumé. They are its building blocks, and each section contains a specific type of information about you. (There's actually one more section that's called a "Profile." This section summarizes your background and takes information from the other sections. It will be discussed in detail shortly.)

With the vast majority of job hunters, the most important sections are their objective, profile, education, and work experience. These are the key component parts of the résumé, and they are used the most often and comprise the lion's share of the information that employers are looking for when deciding whether or not to interview people. Many job hunters, in fact, are able to write an excellent résumé using these four sections alone.

The other sections, if used at all, perform the role of rounding out a

background and providing additional data when it will help to advance someone's qualifications. With some job hunters, such as the graduating student, the individual leaving the military, and the person seeking a career change, these other sections can be extremely important and will sometimes contain the bulk of the information in their résumé. Chapter Five offers important information for these types of individuals.

Let's now discuss how to present your job objective, profile, education, and work experience.

JOB OBJECTIVE

There's enormous disagreement among employment professionals as to whether or not a résumé should state a job objective. A decade or two ago this wasn't the case. This statement was as much a part of a résumé as was the job hunter's name, address, and telephone number.

Throughout the 1990's, however, many career advisors have been telling job hunters to omit an objective from their résumé. Their argument is that this statement limits the types of positions for which someone can be considered. Instead of opening doors, it closes them. Their preference is to begin a résumé with a profile. This will enable employers to get an idea of the different types of work the individual is capable of performing, thus increasing the likelihood of being invited in for interviews.

The camp in favor of including a job objective, however, feels that the absence of this statement can lead people to believe that an applicant is without career direction and will take any job he can get. After all, employers are always telling people that they want to hire goal-directed, motivated individuals. What better way is there to demonstrate that you're this type of person than by beginning your résumé by stating a specific job objective?

For example, imagine the impact it would have on a manager who has run an ad for a "Senior Test Engineer" when he receives a résumé that begins with "Objective: Senior Test Engineer." This applicant is clearly going to get off to a strong start and have his résumé read with enthusiasm. (The opponents of declaring a job objective contend that job hunters can explain their career goals in the cover letter that accompanies their résumé. The fact of the matter is that it's much more convincing when this statement appears on the résumé itself, instead of being typed in a letter that's being custom-tailored in response to an ad.)

Those in favor of stating a job objective also believe that an effective way to offset the possibility of this statement's closing doors and reducing opportunities is to have two or three résumés, where each one is written for a specific kind of position and contains a different job objective. While this approach will certainly be effective for answering ads (you send the

résumé that's the best fit for the advertised position), it won't be as useful for conducting a mass-mailing of your background. Can you imagine how people at a company would react if they received three résumés from you, each one stating an interest in a different type of position?

Clearly, there's no "right" way to handle this matter of the job objective. Here's how to proceed, depending on your individual situation.

If you're interested in doing a specific kind of work, then state this as your job objective.

If you're open to a variety of positions, you have three choices. First, you can write a special résumé for each position, where each résumé states a different job objective. Second, if the positions you're interested in are closely related, you can use one résumé that states all of these positions in the objective. A third possibility is not to use an objective at all, and, instead, begin your résumé with a profile.

If you don't know what kind of work you want to do, you'll be better off not stating an objective and beginning your résumé with a profile.

WORDING YOUR OBJECTIVE

What you say in your objective can range from as little as just stating the title of the position you're seeking, to including information on the kind of organization you want to join and the industry it's in. It just depends on how specific your goal is. Two important factors to keep in mind are (1) how qualified you are for the position you're seeking, and (2) how available this job is. The stronger your qualifications and the greater the job's availability, the more specific you can afford to be when wording your objective. If you don't have strong credentials for the position you want or the job is in short supply, then you had better word your objective loosely so that you don't limit your opportunities.

Here are a number of job objectives to review. Notice that some are very specific, while others are not. Some specify the type of employer that's desired; others note the types of positions that the job hunter is interested in. One objective even mentions the work setting that's desired, while another specifies the importance of having good promotional opportunities. The purpose of listing all these objectives is to show you the wide range you have when stating your employment goal.

Flight Attendant.

A challenging position in Infection Control or related services.

Fitness Counselor, working in a corporate environment.

Chef or Sous Chef at a fine-dining restaurant, country club, or resort hotel.