

BEST **RESUMES**

KIM MARINO

FOR **ACCOUNTANTS** **AND FINANCIAL** **PROFESSIONALS**

- **80 POWERFUL MODEL RESUMES**
- **CAREER TIPS FOR EVERY FINANCIAL AND
ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONAL**

BEST RESUMES FOR ACCOUNTANTS AND FINANCIAL PROFESSIONALS

Kim Marino



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Preface

As the founder of Just Resumes® and author of four resume books, including *Just Resumes*® (John Wiley, November 1991), and *Resumes for the Health Care Professional* (John Wiley, January 1993), I am readily acquainted with the resume needs of accountants and financial professionals. My files contain resume samples from a wide range of accounting professionals, administrators, and chief executive officers, allowing me to stay in touch with this dynamic field and bring this knowledge to bear in this book.

Best Resumes for Accountants and Financial Professionals includes well over 80 resume samples for public, corporate, and government accountants as well as for those changing careers from certified public accountant (CPA) to administrator, chief financial officer (CFO), and chief executive officer (CEO). The book covers both traditional and newly created positions. This step-by-step guide, which will teach you the fine art of creating a professionally designed resume, contains many examples from my vast bank of accounting and financial professional resumes. I have also provided valuable tips and facts that are specific to the accounting profession.

In addition, you will find cover letters, thank-you letter samples, and how-to information to complete the resume packet. Later chapters offer job tips and descriptions of specific key jobs, job trends, and job search techniques. I have included tough questions asked in the interview and examples of answers the interviewer wants to hear.

Whether you're an accounting professional moving up the ladder of success, changing careers, or returning to the work force; or a college student or recent graduate entering the accounting industry, this book is one of the best investments you'll ever make.

KIM MARINO

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The Professional Resume

Whether you are on your way to becoming a Chief Executive Officer or starting out new in the field as a recent graduate, accounting is an exciting profession. Every business—large or small, public, private, finance, or government—needs a good accountant. Some professionals concentrate on one phase of accounting; for example, many public accountants work primarily in auditing (examining a client's financial records and reporting to investors and authorities that the records have been prepared and reported correctly). Others concentrate on tax matters, such as preparing individual income tax returns and advising companies of the tax advantages and disadvantages of certain business decisions. And some accountants concentrate on consulting and offer advice on matters such as the design of companies' accounting and data-processing systems and controls to safeguard assets. Whatever your interest, this profession allows you to specialize in any area of accounting and work in any industry in the world—manufacturing, communications, finance, education, health care, entertainment. Practically every firm needs one or more financial managers—partner, treasurer, controller, credit manager, cash manager, and others.

For those of you interested in changing careers, Chapter 3 of *Best Resumes for Accountants and Financial Professionals* describes many professions that call for your valuable accountant skills, such as hospital administrator, director of human resources, or securities analyst.

A resume is something you should have in your back pocket, ready to give out at a moment's notice. Why? Because you'll never know when that special job opportunity may open up for you. Your

resume is a custom designed, self-marketing tool tailored to your career objectives. A professional resume functions in four ways:

1. It focuses the interviewer's attention on *your* strongest points.
2. It give you full credit for all your achievements, whether you were paid or not.
3. It guides the interviewer toward positive things to talk about in *you*, and, in the direction you want to go.
4. Most importantly, because it lets *you* see yourself in a more focused and positive manner, it puts you in control of your own future. (It's also the first link between you and the potential employer. No wonder there's so much pressure on job seekers to create an effective resume!)

Many resumes in this book are from actual accounting professionals who have been clients of Just Resumes®. Others were created for this book with accurate job descriptions and educational requirements. They are examples of the kind of resume you, with the help of this book, are going to create. Many of these clients came to me with skills and education similar to yours. Working with them, I was able to produce a personalized resume that genuinely reflected their needs, accomplishments, and goals.

Before you leap into the resume-writing process, please take a few minutes to obtain an overview of my approach for creating a professional resume. Read the first two chapters: "The Professional Resume" and "The Straightforward Approach to Resume Writing," and then go through any of the next group of chapters that might apply to you. In Chapter 3, you'll find information on changing careers or making a lateral move. Chapter 4 shows you how to move up in the field you are in. And Chapter 5 offers suggestions for the recent graduate. If you haven't done so already, next turn to the resume samples in Chapter 11 to see how all the theory behind resume writing can be turned into fact.

Reading the introductory chapters and surveying actual resumes will prime you for writing your own resume. You will also want to begin analyzing your own background and pinpointing your targeted career. What you have done in previous positions or gained through education and what you want to do in your career will also influence the format you are going to use. You might go with the traditional chronological format that highlights your job history. You may wish to emphasize your skills by using the highly flexible functional format. Or you may opt to use a combination of

the chronological and functional formats, which is a way of highlighting a specific job or skill while also indicating other previous jobs.

My step-by-step instructions and examples will prompt and guide you in creating your resume. Whichever format you decide to use, your aim should be to capture your strongest qualities, focused on your new job objective. Your professional style resume will show the interviewer and/or potential employer you are qualified for that desired position. When you have completed your first draft, review this book's first two chapters, compare what you've written with the resumes I've included, and revise your own resume as necessary.

If your previous experiences with resume writing have been more frustrating than fun, you are not alone. Perhaps under a looming job interview deadline, you tried to put something together only to have the resume turn out flat and uninviting or scattered and unfocused.

Tip: Lack of focus on your future job objective is the number one reason most resumes fail. All too often, people begin a resume with the wrong focus and either cannot complete it or else end up with an unsatisfactory product.

I help my clients at Just Resumes® concentrate on *where* they are going, rather than where they have been or where they are now. In doing so, they create resumes that still make use of their experience, but in a way that amplifies and directs their skills and experiences toward a specific goal. If you focus on your job objective, not only will your resume point you in the right direction, it also will show the potential employer how the past and present qualify you for that job.

TIPS FOR PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND FINANCE ACCOUNTANTS AND AUDITORS

- Tip 1** The Big Six accounting firms employ three types of accountants at one of five levels. The three types are auditor, tax, and consultant; the five levels are Staff, Senior, Manager, Partner and Senior Partner, or Partner in Charge.
- Tip 2** Most public accounting firms have a *focus* that can be very different from one region of the country to another, even within the same organization. For example, the oil and gas industry may be very strong in Houston, Texas, whereas Denver's focus may be the ski industry. This is largely because many

large cities (such as New York, Houston, and Chicago) have more Fortune 500 corporations than smaller cities (such as Denver), which—as a result—tend to focus mostly on smaller businesses.

- Tip 3 Those of you who enjoy traveling on the job may choose to work for one of the Big Six accounting firms, such as Arthur Andersen. If you're employed in the Denver office and specialize in the oil and gas industry, the company might send you to another office—for example, Houston or the Middle East—to work on a project in your area of expertise.
- Tip 4 Typically, the Fortune 500 corporations have four types of accountants: internal auditing, tax accounting, general accounting, and cost accounting. The five levels are Staff, Senior, Manager, Assistant Controller, and Controller, or Chief Accounting Executive (CAE).
- Tip 5 Finance corporations typically have three types of accountants: credit analyst, financial planner/analyst, and cash management. The five levels are Staff, Senior, Manager, Treasurer, and Chief Financial Officer (CFO), or Vice President-Finance.

TIPS FOR ALL ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONAL JOB SEEKERS

This may be hard to believe, but many job applications live or die in the first 30 seconds of the screening process. It's in that 30-second glance that the receptionist or applications examiner decides either to forward your resume to the next step or reject it. Several strategies, however, can increase your chances of having your resume reach the interviewer.

- Tip 1 Limit your resume to one or two pages. Almost all the resume samples in this book are one page in length. Because they are concise and to the point, the resumes clearly convey the writers' abilities and strengths. If you have so much experience that one page will not suffice, use two pages to get the job done, but in any case, don't try the faulty approach of using a smaller and smaller typeface to cram all the information onto one page. You don't want to make the employer's job any tougher than it is by handing in a hard-to-read resume.
- Tip 2 Your educational background always goes at the end of the resume unless you are a recent graduate and your degree is stronger than your experience, or you are applying for a position at an educational institution.

- Tip 3 Be objective. I advise clients to have an objective on their resumes, even a general objective. Faced with dozens of applications each day, the person doing the initial screening does not have the time to determine what position you're applying for at the organization or firm. You'll also look more focused, and in turn more desirable for the position, than those whose resumes lack the objective. Their loss is your gain.
- Tip 4 If you are an experienced accountant but are unsure which specific area of accounting you'd like to work in or if you're a recent graduate and haven't decided which area you'd like to enter, it's best to say under objective, "A position in the accounting profession." This focuses you in accounting, but if something special opens up, you may also be considered for that position. Some firms will start accountants in specialty areas right out of college, but many do not. There is more about this in Chapter 5.

Consider this incident from Just Resumes. A woman contacted me whose resume had been prepared by another professional resume writer. She was receiving responses but for the wrong jobs. When I examined her materials, I saw that the objective was in her cover letter but not in her resume. In reading the resume (without an objective), I could see how she appeared to be qualified for several jobs, even though she was only interested in one. We worked together, adding a job objective and rewriting the resume so that its components pointed directly to that objective. With a revised resume, now focused on her objective, she received a positive response from the very company she'd written to previously, but this time for the position she desired.

RESUME CHARACTERISTICS

As mentioned earlier, there are three basic resume formats: chronological, functional, and combination. The chronological format, which is written in reverse chronological order, emphasizes your jobs. The functional style highlights your skills, with a lesser emphasis on the job titles. A combination approach uses the strengths of both the chronological and the functional styles.

Most of you are already familiar with the chronological format, the more traditional style. The functional, chronological, and combination resumes all should offer the same information; the difference is in how the information is presented, in what is emphasized.

PERSONAL DATA

With today's equal opportunity requirements, personal data are not required, indeed do not belong, on a resume. Personnel agencies have admitted to me that they've seen examples of prejudice from the persons screening resumes. Sometimes the screener may not even be aware of it.

SUMMARY OF RESUME STYLES

- ▶ The chronological format highlights the progress you've made in your jobs.
- ▶ The functional format highlights your skills.
- ▶ The combination format combines the chronological and functional formats to highlight selected jobs.

THE RESUME APPEARANCE: READY, GET SET, TYPE

The typeface you select is almost as important as the format you use for your resume. With today's ever-expanding computer typefaces, the choices can be overwhelming. To simplify the matter, opt for a typeface that looks professional and is easy to read; it should enhance but not dominate your overall resume presentation (see the resume samples in Chapter 11). Avoid the temptation to use a fancy script style; more effective are such tested stalwarts as Helvetica, Century Schoolbook, or Univers, which are all available through laser printing and desktop publishing on both the Macintosh and IBM computer systems. The type size should be no smaller than 11 point.

Don't scrimp when selecting resume paper—color and texture are the key factors. For the accounting professional, a brilliant white conveys a sense of competence, although ivory and light grey work well too. Whether you're a certified public accountant or chief financial officer, your personal preference plays a part in this, too.

You can choose among many different textured papers. Parchment has a light textured background woven into the paper; classic laid, which also works great with resumes, has a heavier smooth woodlike finished look; classic linen has a lighter clothlike texture; and cotton, the most expensive, feels and looks just like cotton fabric. As with the typeface you choose, the resume paper should complement your resume, *not* dominate it. Resume paper and matching envelopes are available at your local copy shop.

RESUME DO'S AND DON'TS

- ▶ DO choose a job that you “love.”
- ▶ DO spend time listing all your good qualities. This is where you get credit where credit's due.
- ▶ DO include a clear and concise job objective; focus on your objective to show the employer how the past and present qualify you for that job.
- ▶ DO include experience directly related to the objective.
- ▶ DO start each sentence with a vigorous action word.
- ▶ DO list all related experience, paid or unpaid if you're a recent graduate or are reentering the work force. Include experience from community service, internships, and/or volunteer work.
- ▶ DO research the position and organization before the interview.
- ▶ DO keep your resume down to one or two pages.
- ▶ DO follow up the interview with a personalized thank-you letter.

- ▶ DON'T leave out the job objective.
- ▶ DON'T include material or history unrelated to the job objective.
- ▶ DON'T use long, repetitive explanations.
- ▶ DON'T include personal history.
- ▶ DON'T presume that the “personnel screener” understands skills included in the job title—tailor your job description.
- ▶ DON'T take for granted skills that you perform well as a matter of course.
- ▶ DON'T replace a job description with a job title—it's not self-explanatory. An auditor in one firm may not have the same responsibilities as an auditor at another organization.
- ▶ DON'T forget to include your grade point average (GPA) under education, if you're a student or recent graduate and it's 3.5 or higher.
- ▶ DON'T list references unless you have previously received permission or a positive response.
- ▶ DON'T send a “form” thank-you letter. Personalize each one.
- ▶ DON'T *be afraid to show off your skills.*

The Straightforward Approach to Resume Writing

A professionally designed resume conveys a significant amount of information concisely and vigorously. Straightforward, single-line phrases and sentences are easy to read and direct the employer's attention toward your capabilities and desired experiences. If you prefer paragraph form, that can be quite effective, although one-liners are more quickly noticed and understood. In either case, begin each key phrase with an action word, such as *developed* or *implemented*, to describe what you do (see list, "More than 100 Action Words," at the end of this chapter).

Action words energize your resume, but avoid using the same one twice within one job description or, if using the functional format, twice in the Professional Experience section. In a functional resume, you will create subsections, the titles of which will depend on the skills you are highlighting for a specific job objective (see resume samples, Chapter 11).

REMEMBER: ALWAYS THINK POSITIVE AND FOCUS THE RESUME ON YOUR JOB OBJECTIVE.

THE BASIC RESUME ELEMENTS

Whether you decide to use the chronological, functional, or combination format will depend on the way you want to present your

information. Your own background and your objective will determine which resume style will work best. No matter what the format, however, each resume should offer the same basic information.

The resume you will create—functional, combination, or chronological—will incorporate these basic sections:

- ▶ Name, address, and phone number.
- ▶ Career objective.
- ▶ Professional profile (optional).
- ▶ Education and certification.
- ▶ Affiliations.
- ▶ Description of work experience.
- ▶ Employment history with job title, organization name, location, and dates of employment.

Remember:

- ▶ All key phrases start with a vigorous action verb.
- ▶ All job descriptions and experiences focus on the career objective.
- ▶ Education is placed after “Professional Experience,” unless you are applying for an accounting position with an educational institution or organization, or you are a recent college graduate with limited work experience.

PREPARING THE CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME

The traditional chronological resume combines your experience and the employment history under one section. You list each position including the dates of employment, job title, organization name, city, and state, and follow it with a point-by-point description of job experience. Jobs are listed in reverse order beginning with the most recent position.

The chronological resume highlights the progress in your jobs. Because of this, it works best for professionals who are making an upward career move in the accounting profession. For example, an assistant controller for a large manufacturing firm is being considered for a position as controller. The previous positions held by the person show a steady progression toward that goal. A chronological resume, with appropriate job descriptions, would perfectly represent career growth and development leading to this latest position.