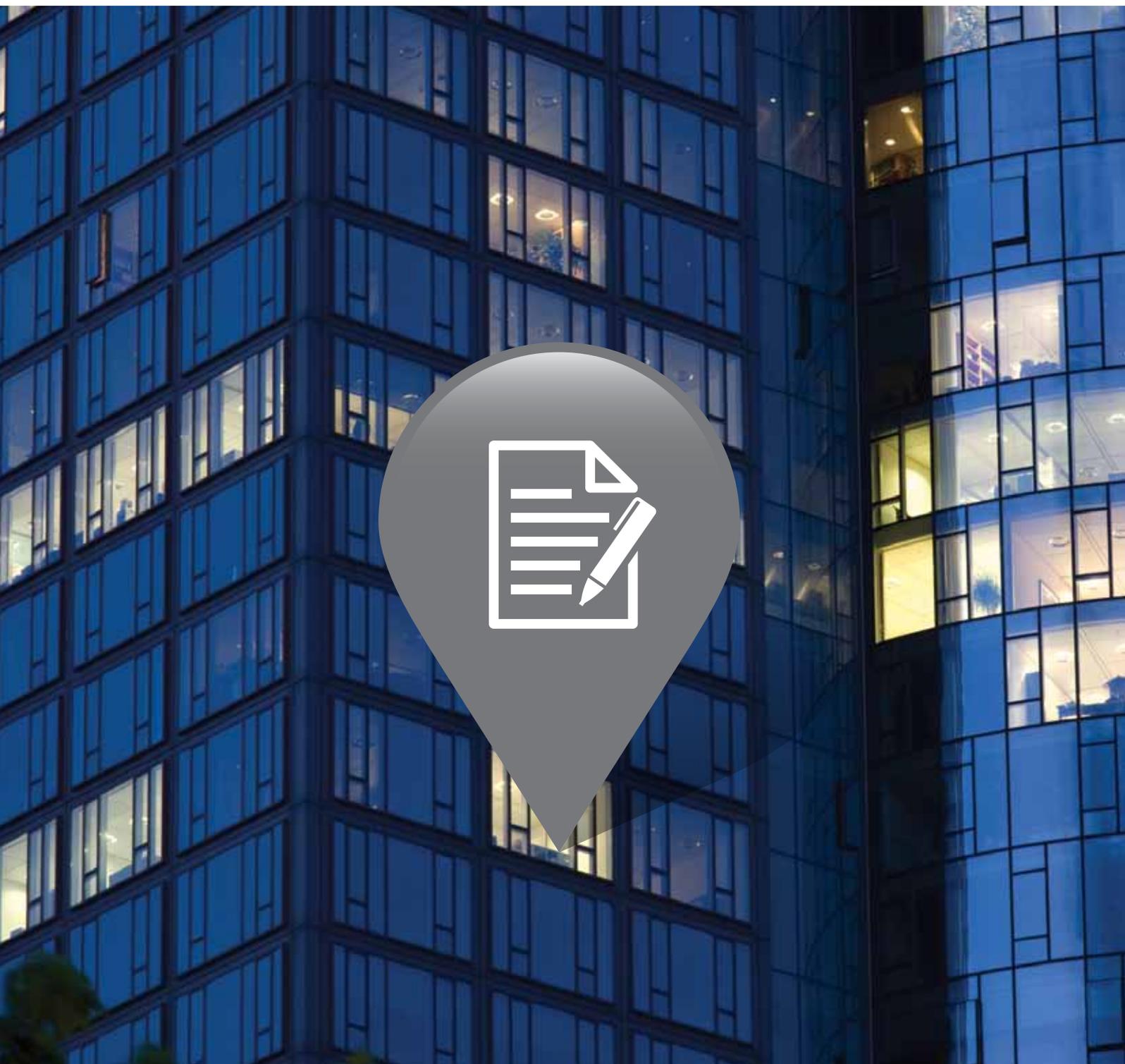# The art of resumé writing

Writing a great resumé

There are many types of resumes out there, functional, chronological, skills-based etc, but really all that matters is finding the most effective way to showcase your skills and expertise, after all these are what will make you a strong candidate.

1 The simple rules

There are a number of rules that you should consider whenever you are writing or editing your resume. They are simple rules but ones that will guide you well in the future:

Put yourself in the employer's shoes

Before you apply for any role you should gain some understanding of the type of person the employer is looking for. That understanding could have come from a job advert, person specification or conversation with a colleague, consultant or even a friend. Wherever that knowledge comes from, use this information as a blue-print for your resume. The more effectively you show a clear match between the skills required and those you possess, the more likely you'll get to interview stage.

Be honest and factual

There's the old adage that ''everyone lies on their resume''. Just because this is true for some, doesn't mean it's the right thing to do. Your resume will typically be used to structure the interview and could be the foundation on which the job is built and so providing inaccurate information will only lead to problems further down the line. So give yourself the edge and use your resume to accentuate your real skills and abilities.

### Make yourself easy to contact

It's seems obvious but not everyone does it! Have all your contact details easily available on all pages – you never know if your resume will get split up. Always include your name, address, telephone number (with an alternative number, if available) and e-mail address.

If you have your own website and you think it will add value to your application, include that too.

Check the format, grammar and spelling – then check again.

Remember that employers and recruiters may get hundreds of resumes crossing their desk and yours needs to be one that stands out. Make sure each area is easy to read and that the points you want to stand out, do stand out. Use a universal font such as Arial or Times New Roman rather than one that may not be available on the recipient's computer.

Always check the resume for spelling and grammar errors. If in doubt ask someone else to double-check it for you and then check it again. Always include a covering letter.
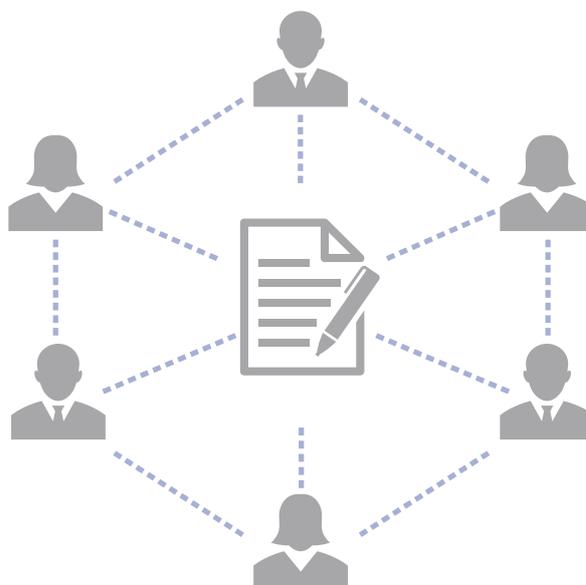
Making your resumé stand out

② Focus on value

Remember, the reader is asking themselves two basic questions: can you do the job advertised and will you fit their organisation?

- Introduce yourself with a strong positioning statement that sums up your personal and professional attributes, taking into account the role blue-print. This should act as a focused summary of what you offer and is designed to grab the reader's attention and highlight what is to come. Keep it simple and snappy.

- Focus on how your involvement with projects showed return on investment. It's no good just saying "I ran a team of three people in Singapore". Instead think about what your management did for that team:

  - Did it improve productivity?
  - Was the team responsible for rolling out a new programme?
  - Did your management result in cost-efficiency savings?

- Every statement you make should focus on your achievements and successes such as cost savings, improvements in business processes. Try and support each statement with numerical evidence, such as "reduced downtime by 15%".

- Your resume should be a living document. To make the most of it you'll probably need to adapt it to specific roles or blue-prints. Hard- pressed employers don't have time to read between the lines, so the more you do to promote your suitability, the greater chance of success. Make it easy for them by:

  - Moulding your resume to their requirements
  - Highlighting where you match their needs
  - Bringing out the added value that you could bring to their organisation

③ Layout

- Use an uncluttered layout with plenty of white space and wide margins.

- Choose a single, common typeface such as times, Arial, Palatino, Optima or Courier.

- Follow best practice: 10-12 point body text, 16 point maximum for headings, no capitals (especially on internet resumes where capitals are seen as SHOUTING), use bold for headings rather than underlining or capitals.

- Don't reduce the font size or margins to fit more in. If you need another page, use one.

- Just print on one side of the paper (and number the pages if there are two or more).

④ Mind your language

- Keep things concise and jargon-free

- Use short sentences and bullet-points. You can expand on these at the interview.

- Don't refer to yourself as 'i' or by name.

- Use verbs and nouns on their own (e.g. 'increased sales by HK$500k...' or 'Major achievements include...')

- Use the past tense to describe your career ('led a team of...') but the present tense for your transferable skills and competencies ('offers experience in...')

- Quantify outcomes in numbers, not words ('retained 100% of staff...'). It's quicker to read or scan

- Always double check it for typing and spelling errors.

5 Work experience

- Employers are usually interested in your most recent jobs, so concentrate on your last two positions – although you might occasionally want to highlight earlier roles if they are relevant to the role you are applying for.

- Start with your most recent position and work backwards.

- Provide a job title, when you started and left the job, the name of the company and a brief description of what they do. Treat a promotion like a separate position and add content accordingly.

- List any of your main responsibilities, achievements, duties and skills that relate to the role you are applying for.

- Describe the scope of your job and level of responsibility rather that listing a job description.

- If you've had many different roles or a long career, you might want to summarise the key points such as 'previous employers' or 'earlier career'.

- Make sure you cover any significant gaps. It's best to tell people what happened than let them use their imagination to decide for themselves - at least you have control.

6 Qualifications, education, training and development

- Usually these come near the end, but if particular qualifications are essential for the job and make you more marketable put them on the first page after your profile or key skills.

- Include relevant professional qualifications and academic ones, but don't include 'bought' memberships.

- List degrees or any executive programmes you have attended and give the subject, awarding body and year. Be honest - they may be checked.

- Add any relevant skills such as languages, technology, vocational or on the job training.

- Include any relevant training or skills acquired while unemployed, on sabbatical or doing part-time or voluntary work.

7 References and client endorsements

* You may want to include the names and contact details of your references on your resume but there is no obligation to. Whether you do include them or not, it's wise to have your referees ready and willing to represent you.

* Include client endorsements and recommendations in the achievements section of your resume – for example 'given a special award by ABC for contribution to ABC project'.