

Making the Most of Your Resume: The Qualifications Summary

The Professional Touch – Qualifications Summaries

A Qualifications Summary is your first and best chance to make a favorable impression on a hiring manager. It is a marketing tool that sells your unique skills to the targeted company. Many individuals overlook or devalue the qualifications summary of their resume, but done correctly it can have a major positive impact on hiring managers. As the managing editor for ResumeEdge.com, I see too many individuals who either do not include the qualifications summary or simply do not give it the level of attention it needs. Begin your resume with a qualifications summary - you'll be glad you did.

To be effective, a Qualifications Summary must

1. Provide a snapshot of you as the ideal candidate for the position.
2. Be concise and to the point, addressing what expertise you can bring to the job to benefit the prospective employer.
3. Address pertinent qualifications in the job posting.
4. List your most stellar and recent quantified accomplishment that pertains to your current job search.
5. Provide additional data that enhances your candidacy, including:
 - A. Linguistic capabilities in foreign languages
 - B. Certifications
 - C. Licensure
 - D. Willingness to travel or to relocate for the new position
6. State specific skills, such as computer proficiencies (if applicable)
7. List your past employers if they are well known, i.e. Boeing, Wall Street Journal, Macy's, AT&T, etc.
8. Work Permits or Green Card data for foreign nationals.

What to Avoid in Qualifications Summaries

1. Use of personal pronouns such as I, my, me, we, us, etc. Resumes are business documents that should employ a conservative tone.
2. Soft skills – i.e. being personable or trustworthy – unless they are backed up by specific data.

Soft skills presented in a weak fashion: "Personable individual with proven "people" skills."

Soft skills that are effective and strengthened by quantified results: "Salvaged \$6 million VIP account with Pepsi-Cola, Inc. through superior communication and client relations skills."

3. Objectives that are vague and self-serving:

"Currently seeking position in which to grow with dynamic organization."

"Want to use creativity and skills learned in college."

4. Any data that is superfluous or does not enhance candidacy for targeted position or career, including:

- A. Outdated computer skills for an IT professional.
- B. A listing of word-processing skills for an executive who would most likely have an administrative assistant to do clerical work.
- C. Academic data (i.e. GPAs, Dean's List, Scholarships) for a seasoned Professional or an Executive.

5. Number of years of employment in the field, unless the job posting specifically requires a set number of years of experience.

To avoid age discrimination or the perception of being over qualified for a particular position, it's always best to state "comprehensive" or "significant" experience, rather than the exact number of years.

6. Laundry lists of skills that are assumed for the position – i.e. a CPA is presumed to know AP/AR, bookkeeping, general ledger, reconciliations, taxes, and the like. Providing this data is not telling the hiring manager anything new or relevant.

Before writing your Qualifications Summary determine:

1. What makes you unique in your given field – i.e. accomplishments, achievements, post graduate degrees, certifications, licensure.
2. What you have to offer the targeted company in terms of past experience.
3. How you meet their qualifications.

Now that you have the details of a well written qualifications summary, don't underestimate its importance. Begin your resume with a strong qualifications summary and you'll start getting interviews and land that dream job!

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About the Author

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