

When Your Professional Experience Is Lacking

Recent high school graduates, some stay-at-home moms, and those individuals who are just starting trade school or vocational college are faced with extra challenges in creating a resume that will prove their worth. As with all resume content, it's imperative to focus on what you do have to offer, rather than what you lack. All it takes is a creative approach in putting your best foot forward.

1. USE A FUNCTIONAL FORMAT THAT STRESSES SKILLS, RATHER THAN EXPERIENCE:

Unlike the popular reverse-chronological format that details employers, titles, dates of employment, and job duties, the functional format showcases what you know.

For a recent high school graduate or those just entering trade school, that may mean clerical skills such as typing (including words per minute), computer proficiency (list software), data entry, 10-key, some bookkeeping, tailoring (sewing), cooking (home economics skills), or whatever was learned in high school that can be applied to a real job.

In the case of a stay-at-home mom, everyday tasks such as managing a household budget, paying bills (bookkeeping in the corporate world), childcare, scheduling pediatrician visits (appointment setting in the corporate world), planning children's birthday parties or family get-togethers (event planning in the corporate world), can all have value in a professional environment, especially in an administrative assistant role.

2. USE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE IN LIEU OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Many individuals erroneously believe that if they weren't paid for work, then it has no value in the corporate world. Nothing could be further from the truth. Skills in fundraising, event planning & coordination, media relations (either speaking with the press or authoring newsletters), activities planning, and community outreach (providing after school activities for at-risk youth, organizing a soup kitchen, etc.) can be stated as skills on a resume so long as the volunteer work is relevant to the current job search. It's equally important to indicate how these skills transfer to a corporate environment – i.e. event/activities planning may be valuable in an administrative assistant position when clerical support is needed to make travel/lodging arrangements for an executive or when a corporate party needs to be organized.

3. SEARCH ONLINE JOBS (HOTJOBS.COM, ETC.) TO DETERMINE HOW YOUR SKILLS MATCH THOSE QUALIFICATIONS MOST WANTED BY EMPLOYERS:

Even a basic entry-level position such as reception requires skill in answering phones and greeting the public. Determine what employers generally want in an employee, through online searches, then dovetail your strengths with their needs.

For example, a recent high school graduate is seeking a job as a receptionist. The information to highlight on this individual's resume is any school activity that would tell the hiring manager this is a people-person, with a pleasant demeanor, who is always willing to help. Information that might relay this would be functioning as a hostess at a school-sponsored Las Vegas night or a fundraising supper, or perhaps this individual represented the school to prospective students during campus visits and tours.

Keep in mind that when you're looking for a job, the company that's hiring is looking for someone who is a good match for a particular job. Be sure that your skills and your personality matches the need of that particular position.

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