

Healthcare Business Today

Smart Résumés Mean Optimal Outcomes In a Competitive Talent Market

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It is a good time to be a jobseeker in healthcare, especially on the clinical side. In today's competitive market, a nurse can land a good job using a résumé written on a banana peel. The administrative side, though, is a little bit different. Non-clinical professionals still have an advantage, given that open positions outnumber qualified candidates significantly. Just the same, a weakness in your résumé can chip away at your advantage.



At a high level, keep these characteristics in mind when developing your résumé: it should be specific, true, achievement-focused and relevant. We talked with several seasoned recruiters to come up with the tips below to help you ensure that it is easy to find you and match your qualifications to an organization's needs.

Keep It Simple

A streamlined résumé will be much easier for search engines and applicant tracking systems to find and process. These systems have parsing functions to scan and pull information from your résumé. Fancy formatting can confuse the parsing functions. Avoid graphics, text boxes, unusual bullet styles and frilly fonts, and also spell out acronyms. You probably already know about keywords, but remember that using a handful of carefully chosen ones is better than lobbing a load of verbiage at the wall and hoping something sticks.

The ideal scenario is that a recruiter looks at your résumé as a whole, and the different elements within it, and thinks, "Nice — short and sweet." With few exceptions, such as a clinician's *curriculum vita* (CV), it should be two pages at most. Definitely include specific accomplishments (see "Spotlight Accomplishments" below), but

list no more than five under each position. Chose accomplishments that are not only significant, but also relevant to the position to which you're applying.

Spotlight Your Achievements

Be concise and economical, but don't skimp on sharing accomplishments — recruiters look for proof that you can deliver results. Be specific about goals you achieved. Rather than something vague like, "led process improvements," state what processes you improved, your role in the project and the impact on the company.

Numbers Need Context

Numbers help demonstrate your accomplishments, whether you use actual numbers ("cut operating costs by \$50,000") or percentages ("cut operating costs by 15 percent"). Either way, provide enough context to show the impact. For example, if your objective was to cut operating costs by 10 percent, make it clear that you exceeded the goal.

Cover Letter Pros and Cons

We all deal with information overload, and our recruiter informants confessed that they don't spend much time reading cover letters. That means that unless the job posting specifically requests a cover letter, you may as well pass on it. Besides, a cover letter could work against you — another opportunity to make typos or grammatical errors.

If an employer asks for a cover letter, apply the same approach you're using with your résumé: specific, true, achievement-focused and relevant. Think "executive summary" — keep it to one page, and tailor it to the open position and organization. For example, if you're applying for a hospital administrator position at a large medical center, explain how your background and experience are directly relevant and set you up for success in the role.

Fill in the Gaps

There are legitimate reasons for career breaks and if you took one, it isn't an automatic black mark on your record. Maybe you took time to get a master's degree or followed a transferred spouse to a new city and state. A legitimate gap isn't a problem unless you try to hide it. Recruiters are smart enough to see the gap, and you don't want to leave it to their imagination.

Go ahead and include the gap in the chronology along with jobs, with dates and a brief explanation. You can even be creative; if you took time to start a family, put "Domestic CEO" and include accomplishments like, "Successfully managed procurement, budgets and scheduling." Be careful, just the same, about providing too

much. Personal information like age, relationships or children can expose you to discrimination. Employers aren't allowed to ask for that kind of information, and you shouldn't offer it.

When Résumés Become CVs

If you do have a clinical background, your résumé will be longer. You should still follow the advice above, but also include all your education, including residencies and fellowship training. List honors, awards, patents, speaking engagements and publications, especially the most relevant ones.

Your résumé is your representative in the talent market, and first impressions matter. Whether you're actively looking or just keeping your options open, you should optimize your market presence by optimizing your résumé.

About Nicole Cox:

Nicole Cox serves as Chief Recruitment Officer at leading nationwide 100 percent virtual recruiting firm [Decision Toolbox](#). With more than 15 years of industry experience, she oversees all corporate recruiting operations including quality, training, sourcing and advertising. Nicole holds a master's degree in organizational leadership and a servant leadership certification from Gonzaga University, as well as a bachelor's in communications with a public relations focus from California State University, Fullerton. She may be contacted at ncox@dttoolbox.com. Learn more about Decision Toolbox at www.dtoolbox.com.

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Tom Brennan is senior writer at leading nationwide recruiting firm Decision Toolbox. For more than a decade, he has played an integral role in developing strategic marketing materials designed to attract top candidates for Decision Toolbox clients. Founded in 1992, Decision Toolbox provides cost-effective, high quality and innovative recruitment solutions for companies nationwide. With unparalleled rigorous quality controls and a twelve-month candidate guarantee, Decision Toolbox has long set and surpassed industry standards. By leveraging the latest tools and its senior team of U.S. based recruiters, DT provides on-demand, scalable recruitment services for companies across more than 60 industries, filling more than 2,500 different job titles at an average of 5-10% cost per hire and an average time to present the winning candidate of 14 days. For more information visit www.dtoolbox.com and find Decision Toolbox on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.