

CAREER CORNER

NEWS ARTICLES & OTHER JOBSEARCH TIPS AND IDEAS WRITTEN BY EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD

Would you like to write an article for the Career Corner? Email us: Jobs@LBPC.com



Once a month, legal professionals will put their cover letters and resumes against a panel of career counselors. The counselors will rate each cover letter and resume between one and five gavels, five being the best. Their comments on the resume are listed below. To view our enter list of career counselors, please visit: <https://bitly.com/lbresumecritique>.

e-mail: ResumeCritiquing@LBPC.com

(Your name, contact info, places of employment will remain confidential)

Click [here](#) to view June's Resume.

The Critiques

Curtis Linder's Resume Critique



Gosh, I am starting to think that page formatting is becoming a lost art. Either that or resume writers (job seekers) are not thinking through the entire process. I mean - this resume does look nice and is formatted fairly well. But there are enough smaller things that should be corrected that encourage me to declare it a 3 gavel resume. Bear in mind - there is no one large problem with this resume - just a small handful of smaller ones. Starting with - centered text. Professionals agree that text centered on a page is the most difficult to read. Next, these four words, References Available Upon Request, are superfluous. She sets her page margins unnecessarily narrow - and one half inch all around. Way to many little black dot bullets. Placing her name and contact information in the header. Even though she creates a two-page resume - at a glance, it looks like about 75% of the text is contained on the first page. You can balance that out with better sized (read: larger) page margins, and font sizing.

Curtis Linder, President and Owner Linder Legal Staffing Inc.

Chere Estrin's Resume Critique



After first reading this candidate's cover letter, stating that she was an "Administrator", I was expecting an entirely different resume. I see where she has been a Team Leader and Assistant Administrator but I don't see where she has been an "Administrator" on her resume. The title, other than Assistant Administrator, appears nowhere. She could be an Administrator in bankruptcy. However, I don't see that anywhere either.

The "Summary" paragraph jumps from third person to first person and doesn't match with the more sophisticated writing style of the cover letter. This leads me to wonder: who wrote the cover letter? Other than a 4 year stint, this candidate has jumped around quite a bit. It is not unusual these days to see this type of movement during the recession and employers are hopefully, more lenient towards the employee's length of employment during this time frame. The resume is expertly done and formatted beautifully.

Four gavels

Chere Estrin, Chairperson Board of Directors, The Organization of Legal Professionals

Jean Krypton-Durham's Resume Critique



While the professional History is laid out in an organized manner, the summary of qualifications does not do this candidate justice. What does she want to do? While I see she has done many things, i.e., docket clerk, paralegal, assistant recruiter, administrative assistant and even supervisor, she needs to focus her resume on the opportunity at hand. I would not use this resume to submit to any of my clients as it is not focused on a specific position. This is someone that I feel needs coaching! What are her strengths and what did she like to do the best? As far as the cover letter, she states: "I have experience in working with high net worth clients" What would that have to do with a docket position and/or clerical position? This would make her overqualified and therefore not even get an interview. I would give the resume only 2 gavels as the professional history is laid out fine.

Jean Krypton-Durham, President Jean Krypton, Inc.

Continued on next Page.

Jean Hellman Ryan's Resume Critique



This resume would be improved by focus on a specific type of job. Separate versions, one for a paralegal job, one for an administrative assistant job, would allow you to choose the appropriate tasks for each and avoid distraction of the reader. Much of the latest job, for example, might be described as monitoring compliance with safety regulations and employment laws. That would also make it possible to cut this resume to a single page. The summary at the top shouldn't be necessary.

A few quibbles: Listing your titles above the employers' names is not to your advantage. Name the employer first. Page 2 should show just your name and "Resume, Page 2." Your AAS degree is an Associate in Applied Science. There are a few punctuation errors.

Rating: 3 gavels

Jean Hellman Ryan, Director, Institute for Paralegal Studies Loyola University Chicago

Sarah Haley's Resume Critique



Cover Letter - 3 gavels

"Good Day" is too casual for a salutation line in a cover letter. "Dear Sir or Madam" or "Dear Hiring Manager" would be more appropriate if it is not possible to identify a point of contact. I would be sure to name the title of the job posting, since there might be more than one, and "administrator" is vague. The potential employer will want to know what First has been doing since October 2011, so it might be helpful to include a brief explanation in the cover letter.

Resume - 3 gavels

This resume is thorough, readable, and well-formatted. The Summary of Qualifications must be tailored to the job posting and error free, so I would make a few grammatical and stylistic changes (avoiding contractions and first-person, for example). In the Professional History section, I would avoid "etc.," and do not capitalize words like "attorney" unless the word is part of a title. Be careful with grammatical errors (for example, attorney's instead of attorneys'). To ensure consistency, if one bullet point ends with a period, then all of them should follow that format. Similarly, months should be spelled out under Education. A potential employer will ask for references, so it's not necessary to state that they are available upon request.

Sarah Haley, Associate Director Career Services at The John Marshall Law School

Nancy Glazer's Resume Critique



I'd like to introduce myself to the panel. My name is Nancy Glazer. I am a career counselor for lawyers as well as a recruiter for legal employers. While my goal for job seekers in the legal industry is to provide as much positive support and ideas as possible, I am also a straight shooter. If I tell you directly why a sentence or an idea in your resume doesn't work and how it could be modified, then I am getting you one step closer to your goal, getting hired.

Cover letter: Whenever possible try to ascertain the recipient's name. If that is not possible, starting off in a creative way, "Good Day," is novel and may wake up someone reading the letter. However, the recipient may have more than one position posted; therefore, it is a good idea to describe in words the position you seek. The most effective cover letters speak directly about the exact needs (or bullet points) of the job. Your cover letter should succinctly demonstrate that you are listening to what they need:

"You need A; I obtained A when I did _____, and I hit it out of the park in that situation. You need someone with B; I did B when I _____, and I brought home exactly what my former employer needed in this exact situation."

Show the reader that you can do exactly what they need, and you are likely to receive an interview! Your last paragraph alludes to this, but it doesn't connect the dots for the prospective employer. The reader does not get the connection that you do; spell it out for her.

Resume:

(a) Summary of Qualifications: If you are going to hit the reader over the head with who you are and what you can do for her, a "Summary of Qualifications" does nothing. Instead, I would rather see a "Profile of Accomplishments" or a "Career Highlights". Why? Because these terms, subliminally, tell me immediately that you are a winner.

Also, what I would rather see are well written bullet points in a Career Highlights section. This section demonstrates to me exactly what you know how to do, and what value you provide. Instead of you telling me that you are "Experienced, highly organized, detail oriented, efficient, personable, dependable, outstanding and knowledgable," I would much rather see examples of your experiences where you have demonstrated these adjectives, what types of matters and kinds of clients. Most importantly, were you successful? What was the result? Can you quantify your value? What did you save your former employer as a result of your work? If you don't know, find out. A prospective employer wants to hire a winner. Show her that you can hit it out of the park for her, too!

In your first listed position, you describe your successes. Nice job! Try to avoid the word, "various," however, as it adds no value to your application. Wherever possible, quantify what you do (drafted 10+ real estate contracts). Also, your last bullet in this section needs to read "Excel spreadsheets," not "spreadsheet."

As a docket clerk, I would like to know for what purposes you "extracted, interpreted and summarized information from contracts. In other words, I want to know what value you added by your specific work assignment.

As a rule, you need to proofread better. I found many spelling mistakes and singular words where they should have been plural. Also, you should try to make your bullets consistent, i.e., delete all the periods at the end of your bullets, not just some periods. With the law firms, there are many ways you can make each bullet stronger and clearer. Generally, just tightening your wording would make your work seem more valuable and productive. I would be happy to show you how I tightened up your writing, if you would like to see the difference and what I am talking about. Also, you do not need to state that your references will be provided; it goes without saying in today's job market.

Overall, I thought your first position's entry was your strongest. You obviously have superb experience; I would like to see it encapsulated more clearly to better show the value you bring to your next employer.

2.5 gavels (-- if we can't do halves, this resume is probably a 2 gavel resume.)

Nancy Mackevich Glazer, Esq., Manager, Legal Launch, LLC