

# CAREER CORNER

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

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resume

*Critiquing*

"Judgement Day"



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November's  
Resume.

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.

E-mail: [ResumeCritiquing@LBPC.com](mailto:ResumeCritiquing@LBPC.com)

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

### The Critiques:

#### Curtis Linder's Resume Critique



Our November 2013 resume is, in a word, sturdy. It meets most of my minimum standards for what a resume should be. It looks nice on a printed page (still important!) and it is not cramped. It is easy to read - by that I mean the font size and text selection are appropriate for a paralegal resume. The bullets (little black dots) are not overused. This is a refreshingly simple resume. And simple in terms of not over-complicated. This is a solid, 4-gavel resume. He lists his temp assignments accurately - so that the reader can easily follow what he has done recently. Many times we see employees who have worked on temp assignments listing on their resume the name of the staffing firm's client (the law firm or the company - which is OK), but NOT when the purposefully omit listing the person's actual employer - the staffing firm. I think many times - that can bring into question an aspect of the author being totally forthcoming. Next, there are a spacing issues (OK - I know that because I love viewing Word documents, especially resumes, using "reveal codes." Technically that is an old WordPerfect feature. In Microsoft Word, it is turned on by clicking the Paragraph symbol on the tool bar.). Other minor things - no need to use italics. And I cannot figure out why so many people place important words on their resume inside of parentheses. Such as (dates of employment). Here - he places his job titles (Temporary conflicts clerk) inside of parentheses. Parentheses are used to contain information one wishes to de-emphasize. And I always think that topic or section headings look way better with a colon after those titles - such as, TEACHING ABROAD: Also by viewing this resume in reveal codes, I can see he is using the space bar as crude (and improper) way to indent lines. Use the tab key for that. But that is just picking a nit. I don't toss out that 5th gavel (our highest rating) very often - hardly ever. Once or maybe twice in ten years critiquing resumes for the Law Bulletin, so when I rate a resume as Four Gavels - it's pretty darn good.

*Curtis Linder, President and Owner Linder Legal Staffing Inc.*

#### Chere Estrin's Resume Critique



This candidate has presented a well-formatted resume. Unfortunately, what is happening is that he is on the track of the permanent temporary. Unless that is his goal (and for some people it is), he's going to have a harder time finding a job than most entry-level paralegals. Temporary work, while a good idea in some instances, can backfire on you if it carries out too long. It appears to employers that something is wrong somewhere. It is evident that this candidate came right out of paralegal school in the midst of one of the deepest recessions we've ever seen. However, now that things are better, employers tend to forget that, and entry-level paralegals can become victims of the economy unintentionally.

What I would do with this resume is to put an objective at the top. The objective should indicate whether the candidate is seeking more temp work, full-time position or starting an independent paralegal business and is seeking clients. I would then state something to the effect of "Recent paralegal entry-level paralegal" seeking full-time (or long-term temporary assignments) with prestigious law firm. Ready to accept sophisticated assignments as an excellent team player." Something that indicates more than he is a temp so if the goal is full-time, he doesn't get caught in the temp cycle permanently. Also, there's a slight misuse of tenses in the line, "Maintains client" where it looks as though he copied a job description. He should keep the responsibilities in the past-tense unless he is describing his current duties.

Three gavels.

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

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## Jean Krypton-Durham's Resume Critique



I would add an objective that zeros in on what type of position he is seeking. As he has no permanent work on his resume - he is going to be slotted for temporary or contract work. If he is able to land a contract to perm position this would be an ideal situation for him. His temporary titles have been Conflicts Assistant, E-Discovery, Research. What skill sets does he want to take with him into his permanent position? Is he seeking a permanent position? As I know who he is because he is registered with us, he needs to rethink and regroup this resume. Needless to say in this time and place, I would give his resume a 3 and I would tell him to create several Objectives based upon the type of position that he is seeking and the skill sets that he would like to use.

*Jean Krypton-Durham, President Jean Krypton, Inc.*

## Nancy Glazer's Resume Critique



This is a fairly good resume. My comments are mostly nit-picks, using Curtis' words. However, of course, I also have some substantive thoughts to consider.

Substance:

- As you graduated in 2011, I believe that your work experience and your education should be flipped. You have great experience; you've now been in the working world. Flaunt it.
- Your experiences as a Conflicts Assistant should be drawn out more. Why? Think about it: lawyers are under extreme pressure to find clients and build their books of business. They have to squeeze business development into their busy days dotting their i's as practitioners, maybe crossing their t's as parents, coaching soccer, etc.

With very little wiggle room in her schedule, let's say Lawyer A lands a new client with a \$500,000 matter - huge success. She brings that matter to you to assess whether the firm has a conflict.

You do your homework. Voila! You find a whopping and conflict with a corner office partner's largest client. Who gets to bring the news of this patent conflict to Lawyer A? I'll go out on a limb here, you are probably are the one with the shortest straw.

I hired a Conflicts Assistant for a Hearings Coordinator position myself. Why did I select the person I did? Of the 70+ applicants who applied for the position, it was her job to analyze conflicts and give the bad news to law firm partners, educated at the best law schools in the country. She had to explain to them why they couldn't represent their new clients. She had not gone to law school. She had a good head on her shoulders and had the ability to muster confidence in her work and make cogent arguments to support her decisions. She was up against lawyers, trained in the art of oral argument. She got the job.

Form:

- You repeat "Conflicts Assistant" in the first bullet. Did you ever have to tell a lawyer "no?" If so, that will show the person on the other side of the desk what you're made of.
- It would be much better if all of your bullets started with a present tense or past tense verb. Give the feeling of action, that you got things done.
- Your Staffing Company II experience should be presented in the past tense.
- Similarly with Staffing Company III - make your tenses consistent.
- Your work at The Law Firm, LLC should be busted up into separate bullets.
- Your "Teaching Abroad" section is the best written of all. You tell the person sitting on the other side of the desk exactly what you did and how you added value.

2.5 gavels

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

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## Sarah Haley's Resume Critique



This resume is visually appealing and overall it is in pretty good shape. In terms of formatting, I would reduce the font size of the name, and add a symbol between the candidate's email address and phone number to denote separation. I would remove the "teaching abroad" section because work experience is listed in reverse chronological order so that role would be listed last anyway. He should include a languages section, assuming that he is fluent in Spanish. It is easier to read the names of months rather than numbers, but that is a matter of personal preference.

For both education and experience, I recommend listed the name of the school or employer first, then the degree or title. Both degrees can be listed under the heading State University. Under experience, I recommend listing the name of the law firm or company first, instead of the agency. All of the bullet points require much more detail, with a focus on key responsibilities and accomplishments, instead of describing the employer. Each role should have at least 2 bullet points starting with action verbs in present or past tense as appropriate. As an example, in the current position with Brinks, to what extent is there communication with other team members, or other departments? Is any research involved? What does "maintains" mean - the creation of charts? Data entry? Any client contact?

Since many of these roles are similar, it might be helpful to add a skills summary at the top of the resume. This would be tailored to the target employer, but would include a list of basic skills such as specific practice areas, e-Discovery, type(s) of software and databases, trial preparation, familiarity with law firm and corporate settings, etc.

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

## Jean Hellman Ryan's Resume Critique



This resume just needs some fine tuning. Attention to these details will instill more confidence in your skills. For example, you probably have a Bachelor of Arts, not a Bachelor's Degree of Arts, and you should add the school's location (and the internship's too). More important is that you eliminate the repetition between your titles and your job descriptions. Each bulleted item should start with an active verb. Some of them are too wordy and include obvious information (e.g., that you report on results). Also, mentioning excellent evaluations at your internship is not appropriate on the resume.

I agree that an Objective would help focus attention on your expertise in certain areas. And yes, italics should be used very sparingly.

Rating: 3 gavels

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

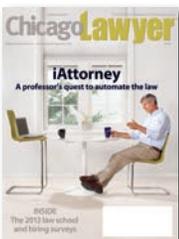
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