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### How to Assess Resume Writers

Here is an excerpt from a recent Forbes article on resume writers:

“Good resume writers...spend a few hours with you to uncover your experience and ask you probing questions.”

The author, a professional resume writer, then talks about two people who had used the services of resume writers: The first, who paid \$500, was evaluated by the author as “using an outdated template, did not uncover [the client’s] accomplishments, and likely had little business or industry knowledge.” He also said that “the fancy design would never get through the Applicant Tracking System (ATS).”

The second prospective client paid \$400 for his resume. Again, the author was concerned about the “creative and fancy looking” resume making it through the ATS. The client “said he had just spoken to a salesperson and only spent 20 minutes talking to the writer, who seemed very young. Two weeks later, the resume arrived. It failed to get him any interviews.”

The author states: “COVID-19 has brought out resume writers in full force. Some lack hiring experience. Many know very little about the ATS. Others know nothing at all. Often, they just have good writing skills. They could be a person who did a little hiring, and they see the flood of unemployed and rush to say, ‘Yeah, I can do that.’ Others may be able to create fancy, creative-looking designs, but that is all they are...*designs, not resumes*. Ineffective, but pretty.”

In short, knowing how to write a resume is much different than just reviewing many. The professional writer needs to have strong knowledge of the careers she writes for, as well as the duties required in each role. She needs to know wordsmithing skills and have personal branding ability. And the writer must understand how ATS works and which keywords to include.

With all of this in mind, here are the recommended steps for hiring a professional resume writer:

#### **STEP I**

##### **Ask for a referral.**

Have any of your friends or colleagues used a resume writer that they liked? Did the resume work to get them interviews?

## **STEP 2**

### **Review their website and LinkedIn profile.**

- » Do they have an online presence that is professional, high-quality, and elegant?
- » Do they have specific expertise in your field, industry, or situation? Professional resume writers often specialize in certain job levels, job titles, industries, or circumstances (such as women returning to the work force after staying home with children).
- » What have others said about them—through website quotes and LinkedIn recommendations? Specifically, what do they say about the experience of working with the writer, and the results they have gotten from the writer's work?
- » How engaging is the copy on their website and LinkedIn profile? Is it well-written and compelling?
- » Do they offer services beyond resume writing, such as job search coaching, career coaching, or interview coaching? (Not only does this create a one-stop shop for you, you'll also benefit from this breadth of knowledge in the resume-writing process.)
- » What resume-writing credentials do they possess? Look for writers with the ACRW (Academy of Certified Resume Writers) or MRW (Master Resume Writer) designations, as these are the gold standards in resume writing.
- » What are their educational credentials? Look for someone with at least a bachelor's degree.
- » What is their work background? Typically, a resume writer has experience as a career counselor, recruiter, or HR professional.
- » How many years of experience in resume writing do they have? You don't want a newbie; look for someone with no less than five years of experience who has helped several hundred clients.

## **STEP 3**

### **Evaluate your interactions with them.**

- » When you initially reached out to them, how responsive were they?
- » What is the tone of your interactions with them? Are they friendly, patient, and engaging, or are they short and distant?
- » Are they eager to speak with you on the phone or via technology, or are they trying to manage everything via email?
- » Do you feel a connection with them, or are you finding it difficult to establish rapport?

## **STEP 4**

### **Review samples of their work.**

- » Experienced resume writers should have samples of resumes they've written (fictionalized, of course) for you to review. If you don't see samples on their website, ask for a few.

- » Resume writers usually write their own LinkedIn profiles, so be sure to ask if that's the case. Ask for the names of other clients they've written LinkedIn profiles for, as well.

## STEP 5

### Ask about the process they use.

Each resume writer uses a slightly different process, so it's important that your resume writer's process works for you. Here are some questions to ask:

- » How do you get the information you need? No one can create an outstanding resume without talking to you directly. Be sure the person you speak to is the one who writes the resume – some companies will utilize sales people or the owner to sell the package to you, which is then farmed out to a relative newcomer for the actual writing.
- » What will the timeline for this project be? Many companies have a five-day turnaround; beware of companies with a standard turnaround of a couple of days, as that doesn't give the writer sufficient time to put your project down and come back to it a few times with fresh eyes.
- » How will changes to my documents be handled? How many revisions do I get, and is there a time limit for those revisions? Will I get to speak to my writer during the revision process?

## STEP 6

### Price isn't everything, but it does matter.

According to the most recent survey of resume writers, prices vary widely, and higher cost doesn't automatically guarantee better results. You should, however, expect to pay more as you advance through your career; your experience is greater, your brand is more complex, and the competition is greater.

According to the Forbes article, a survey of several resume writers with excellent qualifications yielded a range of \$800 to \$2400 for a resume for professionals, managers, and executives. The author notes that the fees are considerably lower for recent college graduates.

As a general rule of thumb, expect to invest the equivalent of 1% of your annual expected salary for the resume only. Here are some examples:

\$60K expected salary – expect to spend approximately \$600 on your resume.

\$125K expected salary – expect to spend approximately \$1,250 on your resume.

\$300K expected salary – expect to spend approximately \$3,000 on your resume.

- » Expect additional charges, ranging from one hundred dollars to several hundred dollars, for cover letters, LinkedIn profiles, executive bios, or other marketing documents you may need.
- » Many people also need job search coaching – either around specific parts of the process (such as interviewing or salary negotiations) or around the entire process of launching an effective job search.

You can expect the hourly investment for such services to range from \$200-\$500+ per hour, depending on exactly what you need and the experience level of the coach.

**In summary:**

- » Does your experience with this person—and her online presence—lead you to believe this is someone who knows what she's doing, will be easy to work with, and will provide you with superior results?
- » Do her resume samples speak to you—both in terms of visual presentation and content?
- » Do others rave about her work and customer service?
- » Does the process she uses work for you?
- » Are the fees for the resume within the range of 1% of your expected annual salary?