# Top Resume Secrets

FIVE RESUME SECRETS THAT WILL IMPROVE YOUR JOB SEARCH SUCCESS

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# Secret 1: Include Third Party Employer Comments in Your Resume

Employers are much more interested in what <u>other people think about you,</u> but a resume is primarily about <u>what you think about you</u> - what you say you have done, how good you think you are, what you think your personal attributes are, etc.

So, there is great power in obtaining several succinct third-party employer comments, or customer comments, or client comments, or supplier comments, to insert into your resume. Like this:

> *".. Rory makes things happen...he reworked our entire marketing campaign resulting in a 26% increase in revenue and a substantial improvement in profitability."*
>
> **John Essy | Client | Trello Digital**

I have spent over 15 years writing resumes and I have a good understanding about which resumes are more likely to secure interviews.

I rate inserting third-party comments from employers or other authoritative people about some positive aspect of your work (or your character, or a project you worked on, or the customer service you provided or...fill in the blank) as probably the single most important words appearing on a resume document. These comments have tremendous power in influencing an employer.

Yet it's ironic that most resumes don't include these. We all know the power of Google reviews any other review platforms, and how they influence us greatly when we are deciding to purchase a product or service. It's no different for an employer. They are also purchasing a product (you) and they want to know what others think about you.

One of the most powerful inputs that will influence their decision to hire you are comments from other people who you have worked for, or worked with - or in some other way are able to provide an informed comment on how you work.

I always include these comments in the top half of the first page.

Now I hear you complaining that this involves too much hard work going back to past bosses to get some comments, or that you don't have anyone you could ask.

Firstly, you are not looking for a written reference, just a one or two sentence sound bite (see examples below). Secondly, <u>I'm going to make it easier for you</u> by providing an example that you can copy and paste to send as a text message or email to the person you need to contact. (BTW, this is why I recommend you always listen out for and write down

any positive comments, or experiences that could be used on a resume for later use. Any time a boss or colleague or customer or supplier or stakeholder of any sort provides some positive verbal feedback, spoken or implied, write it down and save into a 'Resume Comments' file for later use. They are gold).

Thirdly, yes it involves a bit more work but that's why you do it – because no-one else is doing it! And it will you the edge. They can have tremendous impact on the prospective employer. Many activities in a job search are about doing those difficult (although not too difficult) things that no one else is willing to do.

*Successful people are just average people who are willing to do the things that unsuccessful people won't do.*

Below is an example of what you could send and some examples of the types of comments you are looking to come back. It could be worth trying to touch base with a phone call before you send this out to let them know what you are after and stating that you will send them some details, including examples, to try to make it easy for them.

Also having these two touch points instead of one (phone and email/text) also increases the chances they will take action for you, but you may still need to chase them up.

Change the details below to fit your circumstances:

Hi Melissa,
*(a little introductory small talk, then..)*
I'm currently putting together a resume and it has been recommended by a professional who is helping me, that it would be beneficial to have some comments from past employers, suppliers customers etc. on my resume. I was wondering if you might be able to help me out.

What I'm looking for is just one or two sentences regarding some positive aspect about my work, about my personal character traits (applicable to the work environment) or any other comment that would be helpful to a prospective employer. I'm not looking for a reference – literally just a sentence or two that can be incorporated into the resume body.

**Here are some examples of the sort of thing I am after:**

Example 1:
*"Kirsten has an outstanding work ethic; nothing was ever a problem...she communicates well with clients and has a brilliant eye for detail..."*

**Trevor Mitchell | Head of Design | Bayleigh Group Pty | Brisbane**

Example 2:
*"Casey is an extremely reliable staff member who takes constructive criticism and feedback well. He has good organizational skills and exhibits a friendly disposition amongst colleagues"*

**Sally Mees | Acting Principal | Moreland State School | Queensland**

Example 3:
*Courtney demonstrates great ability to grasp and manage difficult business issues and statutory obligations, plan and execute processes, and train, oversee and mentor staff..”*

**John Metcalf | Director | PLP Accountants Pty Ltd | Sydney**

Example 4:
*"Karen gave me her complete attention during our interaction. She was not aggressive but was genuine and extremely positive in her approach. She was very confident in communicating the quality and application of the products being sold.”*

**Excerpt from mystery shopper report in which I scored 100% - the only person in the company to do so in the last 5 year**

Thanks Melissa, I really appreciate your help.

# Secret 2: Include Company Logos and Company Description in 'Work Experience' Sections

Example:

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WORK HISTORY

**Business Banking Partner**                                                          **Mar 2001 – Nov 2004**
**National Australia Bank | Sydney**
 **Achievements and Responsibilities**
- *carried out six months in a support role after completing the banks graduate program. Subsequently promoted to managing a client base of over 300, then elevated to oversee a diversified client portfolio of approximately 700*

Australia's largest business bank & fourth-largest overall. NAB employs 30,000 staff to service 9M customers

- *developed quickly in stakeholder negotiation and risk management skills due to significant increase in department responsibilities over a 12-month period*
- *Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took...*

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## WHY INCLUDE A COMPANY LOGO OF THE ORGANISATION YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY WORKED FOR?

There are a few reasons for this:

1. The first is to do with the fact that your resume is firstly and foremost a personal marketing document. One of the first rules of marketing is to stand out from the crowd. And when it comes to job search applications and the hundreds of resumes that are often submitted for each job, standing out from the crowd is critical. When writing a resume, this question should always be at the forefront of your mind: "How can I make my resume more interesting to the reader when I know they are going to be swamped with large volumes of resumes?" Of course, with the extensive use of applicant tracking software these days, a high number of resumes will not even be seen by the human eye. But right now, we are focusing on when your resume does finally get read by a human.

2. Visually linking yourself to a brand will generally have a positive influence on the reader. This is truer if the organization you worked for is well-known in the marketplace but even if this is not the case, a logo is valuable on your resume. Businesses spend millions of dollars every year on branding - attempting to buy a

piece of the consumer's mind with a positive message about the company. You can take advantage of this on your resume by implying that "part of your history is connected with this known brand". The organizations you have previously worked for do not need to be nationals or multinationals. This principle works equally well at a local level where local brands are well-known in the community.

3. The professional logo image adds an aesthetically pleasing aspect to an otherwise 'black ink, white paper' reader experience.

You may have heard that applicant tracking software (see sidebar) can't read images. That's true, but that doesn't matter at this stage as this is about impressing the human reader, not ATS systems. Having an image in your resume will not penalize you in the ATS scan, it simply means that the image will not be parsed to the ATS database. It is however a good idea to save the text box with the logo and company description as one image. This stops the text description of the company showing up in the ATS in a location you don't want it to (ATS reads text from left to right across the page and the text inside the text box will become scrambled by the ATS if the text in the box is not saved as an image). Here is a very short video on how you can save a text box as an image in a word document.

> **Applicant Tracking Systems**
>
> *Applicant tracking systems are used by most large employers. An ATS will scan your resume before a human gets to see it. If certain keywords and other criteria are identified in your resume, it will proceed to the next stage of being viewed by a real person. If your resume does not meet the criteria of these algorithms, then it will never be seen by anyone.*

You can also add logos to the *Employer Comments* section of your resume (see Secret 1 above), but don't flood your resume with logos. No more than 4-5. If you have the option of having more logos available than you need, use the ones that are the most recognisable in the marketplace.

## Secret 3: Match Top 4 to 5 Skills from Job Advertisement to First Half of Page One on Your Resume

A resume is a bit like a newspaper article. The most important information needs to be at the very beginning (Headline) and the more detailed and slightly less critical information, disclosed further into the article.

A good way to do this is to read the job description and identify the top four or five requirements the employer is seeking. Then in a very meticulous manner, ensure that each of those key skills is addressed in the first half of page 1 of your resume. This could be stretched to the entire page 1 if necessary but the earlier in the resume, the better. This is

because many resumes are only read on page 1. If the employer or recruiter does not find any compelling reasons to read pages 2 and beyond, key information on those pages will not get seen.

This newspaper article type approach can result in quite a compelling resume from a personal marketing perspective. You have forthrightly and concisely communicated how you are a good match to the key requirements for the job early on in your resume. Employers love this ability to succinctly put your case and save them time. It can be frustrating for employers to be reading a resume while in the back of their mind they are saying *"just give me the facts, I've got another 50 to get through."*

## Secret 4: Write Your Resume Firstly for the Human Eye and Secondly for Applicant Tracking System

Although a lot of job applications these days do pass through applicant tracking software (see sidebar in no.3) before a real person gets to view it, it's the real person who is the most important and who will make the final decision. However, it is always a matter of finding the right balance because if you are unable to get your resume through ATS, you needn't worry about impressing the employer.

I find the best way is to first have an intelligent guess at whether your application will likely be subject to ATS processing or not. If you are applying to a large company or through a recruitment



agency, your resume will almost definitely go through applicant tracking software. But if you are applying directly to a smaller size company, chances are your application will be processed in a conventional manner and will be looked at firstly on a computer screen or in hard copy (some employers still print out resumes to read them, particularly when there is a large volume).

You may have read a lot about ATS and how just about all employers are using them. This is simply not true. Most information you are likely to read on the web is related to the US market or other larger western nations. It's important to remember that 98% of all

businesses in Australia are small businesses (less than 20 employees) and this group employs almost half of all workers. An exceedingly small percentage of this large group of employers will be using ATS when employing staff, except where a business has elected to engage a recruiting company to do the hiring for them.

Assess whether your resume is likely to be subject to ATS scanning. If you think it will be, this is what I recommend.

Firstly, write your resume while completely ignoring keywords and other criteria that ATS will assess. Focus entirely on writing your resume in a conventional manner to impress a human being only. Having completed that, go back through and assess potential ATS requirements from the job advertisement separately, i.e. include the keywords and other synonyms related to skills stated in the advertisement, keywords related to qualifications, keywords related to any software or programs, languages etc.

The reason for this two-step approach is that the most important focus needs to be on the human being who will be reading it. An ATS system will not be selecting you for a position. The power of the employer or recruiter in picking the candidate is much more thorough and complex than an ATS system, so your resume needs to put more focus on addressing that. What you want when you resume is finished is a wonderfully crafted personal marketing document that does a great job of selling you to an employer or recruiter. And then secondly that resume must also have enough attention paid to ensuring the correct keywords and other criteria are included to satisfy ATS systems.

## Secret 5: Send Both Hard Copy & Digital Copy of Resume

There are two reasons you should send a hard copy as well as a digital copy of your resume to employers.

The first reason is a marketing one. There is a term in advertising known as frequency. It is widely accepted that increasing the number of times (frequency) an advertisement is displayed will increase the likelihood of somebody taking action and buying a product or service. The main reason for this is that they have simply become more aware of the product or service and are more likely to remember it.

This same principle applies with the job search. There have been many job applicants who have got the job simply because they had kept communicating with a particular organization or person repeatedly (without becoming a nuisance).

By sending a hard copy of your resume as well as your digital, you have increased your frequency and exposure to the employer.

*(For the same reason, I recommend prospective employers try to call the employer/recruiter before submitting a resume to ask an intelligent question or two about the position. Many job advertisements specifically now state your option to do this, but even if they don't you can still implement this strategy if you are able to find out the decision-maker's name by carrying out some research on the company. Once again, the sole purpose of this is to increase your exposure to the employer, allow another point of contact and an opportunity for you to begin to build a relationship).*

One of the best ways to send in a hard copy is to buy an inexpensive courier bag (in Australia that will cost you about $6) and address it to the decision-maker, if you are able to establish who this is. Attach a sticky note with a handwritten message saying something like:

*"This resume is a copy of an application I have already sent digitally. I wanted to be absolutely sure my application was received and didn't disappear into cyberspace, as I am extremely interested in this position."* (change any wording to suit your personality and the position being applied for but you must portray a sense of intense desire for the role. Research tells us one of the key criteria that attracts employers to prospective employees is their enthusiasm for the job).

The second reason to send both hard and digital copies of your resume is that you have now completed an action in your application that almost no one else will have done. As mentioned previously, one of the key criteria for successful marketing is to identify and execute strategies that no one else is doing as this will increase your opportunity to stand out from the crowd. By sending a hard copy you have greatly increased your chance of your resume being read by a real person compared with it being submitted via a job portal, ATS system or email. Keeping in mind that most resumes for job applications submitted via those last three methods do not get read by a human being.

You have just dramatically improved the chances of your resume being read by a key decision-maker because it will arrive on his/her desk in a courier bag, personally addressed to them. In most cases that will have impact.

This strategy is most likely to be successful when applying directly to the employer rather than through an agency, however it will still probably have some level of success through an agency as the principles outlined above still apply. The only time I wouldn't use this strategy is if it emphatically states in the advertisement not to apply for this position in any other way except through…. (whichever way they state). In other words, you need to be sure you are not doing something they have categorically told you not to do.