

employment professionals discover early in their professional career that thorough resume reading is a must. In having read thousands of resumes as an employment manager, I have found that the specific experience and/or skills sought by my employer were sometimes not described until the second or third page of the applicant's resume. This experience has conditioned me to read resumes with a fair degree of thoroughness. Most professional employment managers are likewise sufficiently concerned with finding well-qualified employees for their organizations that they are equally thorough in their resume reading approach.

This is not to say that there are not those who are less diligent in their reading. To the contrary, I am sure there are some who are much less thorough. Such individuals may be superficially impressed with these opening paragraphs and may elect to invite the candidate in for an employment interview with a less than a complete screening of the candidate's qualifications. In the better companies, however, this superficial approach to resume screening will quickly attract attention, and the employment professional will soon be exposed as a nonprofessional. Poor resume screening will assuredly result in unnecessary interviews, wasting the valuable time of line managers and costing the company unnecessary money in the form of candidate travel reimbursement. Such inefficiencies will not long be tolerated, and careless employment managers may well find themselves in the unemployment line.

Of course there are well-qualified candidates who without professional guidance sometimes elect to use the functional employment resume. It is up to the employment manager, therefore, to thoroughly read the *entire* resume to determine whether or not the candidate possesses the prerequisite skills and qualifications sought by his or her company.

### SOME CAUTIONS

Perhaps the biggest drawback of the functional resume is that it seems to be the format most frequently chosen by individuals who wish to disguise some flaw in their credentials. In fact, as an employment professional who has read several thousand resumes, I would estimate that in seven out of every ten cases functional resumes have intentionally been chosen by the employment candidate to camouflage such problems. Awareness of this history of deception causes most employment professionals to become suspicious when this particular format is used. The tendency is thus to read these resumes as if one were on a witch hunt. Energy and focus are directed toward finding out what is wrong with the candidate instead of being directed toward whether the candidate possesses the desired qualifications.

I have discussed my feelings concerning the functional resume with several other personnel executives and have frequently found that their feelings are generally similar to my own. In general, the consensus appears to be that if an employment candidate uses the functional resume format, he or she is probably attempting to hide one or more of the following facts:

1. *Older Worker.* The applicant is older and is attempting to hide this fact.
2. *Employment Gap.* There is an undesirable or unexplained gap or break in the candidate's employment history. Since this gap is frequently unexplained, it leads the employment executive to conjure up all kinds of undesirable explanations (for example: major illness, marital problems, alcoholism). Most of these spell high risk in the minds of the employment professional.
3. *Educational Deficit.* The applicant lacks the requisite educational credentials normally required for the position for which he or she is applying.
4. *Minimal Experience.* The candidate has little if any meaningful experience related to his or her job objective.

### CHOOSING WHICH RESUME FORMAT TO USE

The rule of thumb for choosing between the chronological (both classical and linear) and the functional resume is fairly simple. If you have good credentials and a solid work history, I strongly recommend that you use a form of the chronological resume. Why cast unnecessary doubt on otherwise excellent credentials?

The reciprocal of the above statement is also true. If you have some good experience and major credentials, but also have one or more of the aforementioned problems, you may well want to seriously consider use of the functional resume format.

#### Resume Format Test

If you are still in doubt, perhaps the following practical test may be of assistance to you in deciding whether to use the functional resume format.

Answer each of the following questions with a yes or no.

1. Have you worked for four or more employers in the last 10 years? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
2. If employed for more than 10 years, have you averaged less than three years of service per employer? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you been employed with more than seven companies during your professional career? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you age 50 or older? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. Have you been unemployed (or substantially underemployed) for a period of more than one year in the last 10 years? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you been unemployed (three months or longer) more than once in the last five years? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you have the necessary educational qualifications normally required by most employers for your occupation? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you lack the experience normally required by most employers for your profession? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered yes to one or more of the first three questions, by most standards you would be considered a job hopper. Use of the chronological resume

would highlight this problem early in the resume and, in many cases, would result in your being screened out. Use of the functional resume under these circumstances is to your distinct advantage.

Although illegal, the screening out of candidates because of age continues. Some inroads have been made in this area, and it appears that most employers are now paying less attention to age than they are to the qualifications of the individual. Unfortunately, however, age 50 appears to be a bench mark of sorts for many employers. Rightly or wrongly, many employers assume that a candidate who is age 50 or older lacks the necessary energy and vitality to be a productive worker. This fact suggests that candidates who are in this age group should attempt, where possible, to conceal this fact. The functional resume format can be particularly effective in accomplishing this objective.

Questions 5 and 6 have to do with gaps in the employment history. Should you have such a gap or should you have been substantially underemployed for a period of time, you may wish to employ the functional resume to focus on your strengths and accomplishments and to draw attention away from this employment gap.

If you answered no to question 7, chances are that use of the chronological resume may cause you to be screened out on the basis of educational credentials. The functional resume, on the other hand, gives you the opportunity to highlight your strengths and accomplishments early in the resume and may generate interest sufficient to cause the prospective employer to disregard your educational deficiency.

If question 8 was answered yes, you will probably do better in adopting the functional resume. Here again the reader's attention will be focused on what you consider your strengths and accomplishments rather than on your lack of specific job experience. . . .

## FUNCTIONAL RESUME COMPONENTS

Although there are several different styles or versions of the functional resume, the most frequently used format is comprised of the following components:

1. Heading
2. Qualification summary
3. Major accomplishments
4. Work history
5. Education

The order in which these components are presented on the resume can vary, but the sequence represented above is the most commonly used, accepted, and recommended format. The most frequent deviation from this recommended sequence, however, is the positioning of the education and work experience components. Note that the sample resume shown in Figure 1 has been positioned such that education follows work experience.

**BRUCE B. CHAMBERS**  
813 Locust Lane  
Lake City, Texas 09413  
Phone: (217) 855-3939

### SUMMARY

Marketing executive with over 20 years experience in sales and marketing management. Excellent reputation as a creative, innovative manager capable of successfully revitalizing old product lines and introducing new. Full range of marketing and sales experience to include: market research, market planning & analysis, advertising & promotion, sales, and sales management.

### MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Market Research**  
Investigated and analyzed European market for U.S. lumber export with resultant successful market entry.
- Worked closely with R&D in development of consumer mini-pocket calculator. Careful design of test market and resultant market feedback assured successful product development and subsequent market entry (\$5 million sales in two years).
- Developed market research computer model to forecast ten-year market projection for microwave ovens.
- **Advertising & Promotion**  
Coordinated company efforts with major New York City consumer advertising agency to develop effective campaign to revitalize failing product line (fishing reels). Campaign expenditure (\$2 million) yielded annual increase in sales of \$4.1 million in one year.
- Developed creative special value coupon and supportive advertising campaign that increased annual sales volume for photographic film product line by 35% over two-year period.
- **Marketing & Sales Management**  
Managed national sales organization of 95 employees (ten regional managers and 75 salespersons) in the sale of consumer photographic film to wholesale and retail trade.
- Directed Corporate Marketing Staff (25 employees) in the development of all marketing plans and strategies for manufacturer of consumer hardware (annual sales volume \$500 million).
- Successfully organized, trained and motivated new national sales organization of 45 employees for manufacture of consumer calculators. Sales reached \$20 million in four years.

FIGURE 1 Sample Resume

