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Your E-Resume

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RESUMES FOR THE E-SUPERHIGHWAY

Almost all resumes today are electronic to some degree. (For instance, we use personal computers and software.) Beyond the means we use to create them, it is important that resumes can be transmitted electronically and that the reviewer can open them easily. After that, our concern as usual is with quality. The aim is to present yourself efficiently, so that no matter who (or what, in the case of a database search engine) opens your resume, it is clear that you are goal-oriented and qualified for the job.

UPLOADING YOUR E-RESUME

Many potential employers use the Internet to list their job postings. Some use their own corporate Web sites. (The *Everything*® book publisher, Adams Media at www.adamsmedia.com, has an Employment link on its home page.) Many also use headhunter sites, where the Web site organizes and displays an employer's advertisement and also makes sure qualified applicants come to the employer's attention.

The process of uploading a resume from your personal computer is simple. Web sites walk job seekers through the process step by step. The process may vary a little, but in all cases you are using your Internet connection to send the electronic file containing your resume to the online job bank.

File Format for the E-Resume

Uploading is easy, and it is a very effective way of making your resume easily available to many potential employers. However, the electronic file that contains your resume must be in the correct format. Your uploaded resume is useless if the database can't store it.

All online job banks specify the file format you should use. The following are some common formats.

- **Microsoft Word.** Almost everyone in almost all professional fields uses Microsoft Word. If you create your resume using another application, you can probably save your file as a Word document.
- **PDF.** This format is also very common on the Web. PDF files retain the formatting of the original file and they tend not to be corrupted in their travels across the Internet. You can create a PDF from almost any file format. PDFs cannot be edited or altered, making them a good way of keeping your content exactly as you created it.
- **Web page input.** Some job banks ask you to create a resume by filling in the fields of a resume form. In this case, you are not really uploading a file at all. The information you enter into the various fields gets saved directly into the job banks database. Instead of storing resume files, this database contains the information directly.

No matter what format you use, you should do a quality check before uploading your file:

1. Make sure your resume file can be opened, and that it is formatted correctly. Word files can be corrupted, and PDFs can substitute fonts and change things like font size or margins. Do not assume that just because you saved the file or created the PDF that it will meet your requirements.
2. Name your file correctly. Check the requirements of the job bank: They might have a system for naming files. In general, your filename should be short and descriptive.
3. If you are filling in a Web form, take your time entering your information in the fields. Keywords here are essential. You might need to edit your resume, aiming to keep things short while using as many keywords as possible.

Keywords Are Essential

Many job seekers upload their resumes to Web job banks. These are true e-resumes: the potential employer only sees this electronic version. Often, before any human being lays eyes on these e-resumes, they are subject to review by a search engine. This tool is loaded with certain keywords that the employer has defined as critical to any applicant's qualifications. Regardless of your abilities, if your qualification summaries do not use these keywords, it is likely that you'll never make even the first cut.

Here is where your research pays off. In defining your goals and drafting your qualification summaries, you learned the terms and phrases used in your chosen field. When possible, in your statement of objectives, you should name a particular title that you know is used in your field. The verbs you use to describe your qualifications and experience should mirror those terms as closely as possible.

Here are two statements of objectives that could be used for the same resume. See which one would yield the more fruitful keyword search:

- **Objective:** Position designing logos and graphics for state-of-the-art Web sites.
- **Objective:** Position as Web Designer for software design firm, using skills in XML, DHTML, streaming video, Flash animation, Oracle database design, and Web site maintenance.

Chances are that you are uploading your resume into a job bank in answer to a specific job posting. The smartest thing to do, therefore, is to compare the job description to your resume. Does your resume, particularly your qualification summary section, contain the key verbs, terms, and phrases used in the job description? If this job description is short or vague, search the Web for other descriptions of similar jobs. You will notice that they use a common vocabulary to define job functions and desired qualifications.

Keep an Inventory of Keywords

As you continue to search out new job postings, you will learn new industry-specific ways of phrasing your qualifications and summaries. Rather than rewriting your resume every time you find a new, more appropriate term, keep a list. Update your resume when you have a collection of these terms. In this way, your update will not only be more efficient in terms of time, you may come up with better ways of phrasing whole sections, instead of changing a word at a time.

Check the rules of your online job banks. Most allow you to regularly update your resumes. When you do an update, take the time to upload it so all potential employers always see the best and most accurate depiction of your job skills.

E-MAILING YOUR E-RESUME

Some job postings ask you to e-mail your resume directly to a contact person.

The process here is very simple: Your e-mail message is your cover letter, and your resume gets included as a file attachment. An e-mail cover letter should be short and direct. The first line should state your purpose (“I am writing in response to your posting for an experienced Web Designer”). Any subsequent text should state your qualifications bluntly (“I have five years of freelance experience designing Web sites for independent movie studios, sometimes using GoLive and Adobe Design software but mostly writing my own code to incorporate movie clips and other complex elements”).

How much info should I include in my e-mail?

It’s a good idea to say what made you respond to this posting (“I use links to your site to give visitors access to real-time industry news, and I would love the opportunity to work for you”). E-mails are quick and informal by nature. You know from experience that an overwritten e-mail is hard to read. Be polite, but don’t be stuffy.

E-Mail Etiquette

In this case, the question of file formats is particularly important. Pay attention to the stated format requirements, and do not bother submitting a resume that doesn’t meet them. You may think PDF is much better than Word, but if Word is what the contact person requests, he or she will not appreciate your superior taste.

The common question with an e-mailed file of any kind is whether the recipient got it in a legible form. If your resume file is huge, with graphics and other special features, it will take a long time to transmit and to open. Nobody appreciates being made to wait, so for e-mailed resumes, it’s a good idea to keep things very simple.

Regardless of your care, file attachments do sometimes still get mangled. That gives you an automatic excuse for a follow-up. Ask the recipient to let you know if your file did not come through. Take the opportunity to slip in another quick selling point. There’s no harm, as long as you have the contact’s address, in sending periodical follow-ups, as long as they are very brief and not demanding in any way.

Addressing the E-Mail

Job postings often ask you to reference a job number in your subject line. Be sure you include this information, as it is unlikely your e-mail (or resume) will reach its destination without it.

Most job postings include a link to the contact person’s e-mail. All you have to do to address your e-mail properly is to click on the link. You must also use a personal address, however, in your cover e-mail. Online job postings are notorious for giving little to no information about the contact person. Sometimes all you have is an e-mail address and no name at all. Use whatever information you have. If you don’t have a contact name, start the letter immediately after the address, using no salutation at all.

WEB-BASED RESEARCH AND JOB SEARCH

The Web is full of all the information you could ever need to know about your chosen career. Chances are that your dream job is out there somewhere, too. If only you could find it.

In doing research on the Web, the best place to start is with what you know. It doesn’t matter whether you start off in the exact right place. The Web is a job seeker’s paradise because it is so easy to follow any trail in whatever direction

you choose. Here's an example. We'll let our Web Designer friend Chris Smith take a quick look around the Internet to see what's happening in the working world.

1. Chris is just beginning a job search, so she starts at her favorite all-purpose search engine (we'll say that's *www.google.com*).
2. Chris types in her chosen job title, "Web Designer," in the search field and narrows the search just a little by adding "employment."
3. The Google search engine returns more than a quarter of a million Web sites that are related somehow to the phrase "Web Designer employment." Some of these sites belong to other Web Designers looking for employment. Chris ignores these for now, although later they might be a good way of networking with others in her field. She wants actual job postings. She doesn't have to look very hard to find them. The second listing on the page lists a job posting for a Web Designer.
4. In the next five minutes, Chris finds the following information, just by clicking links that look promising:

- Dozens of job postings for Web Designers, containing plenty of keywords.
- Several big job banks, or headhunter sites. These contain not only job postings for Web Designers, they give Chris an idea of what companies are hiring, what industries in her part of the country use Web Designers, and what qualifications employers expect.
- Salary information. Some job postings include a salary range. But these are not often reliable, so Chris clicks around a little and finds salary statistics on an employment-related government Web site.
- Sites of individual companies with pages devoted to current openings, all with contact people listed.
- An online forum of people just like herself, experienced Web Designers of all kinds. Their discussions cover topics like "Freelance Survival" to "Making It Big in the Corporate World."

These are the results of a real Web search, using these keywords, conducted during a quick coffee break. As you can imagine, the real key to getting useful information from the Web is knowing when to stop. Five minutes can easily yield more information than anyone could use in a week. The Web is a huge, chaotic haystack of information; it's true. But as long as you don't worry yourself about hunting for one in particular, you'll find more needles there than you can possibly use.

Vistas for the E-Job Search

Here are a few avenues for beginning your online job search:

- Check with your local librarian to see whether your state sponsors a job bank or whether individual listings can be found online.

- Check the Web sites of companies in your chosen field.
- Use a Web search engine to find the big headhunter sites (like *www.hotjobs.com*, *www.monster.com*, or *www.headhunter.com*).

Your local newspaper may also list its help wanted ads online. Online listings are usually much easier to search than the printed version. Also, ads often include a link to the company's Web site, where other suitable postings may be found.

REACTIVE AND PROACTIVE E-STRATEGIES

It is easy to think of the Web as a giant fishing pond. You as the job seeker have a certain kind of bait on your pole, and you dangle your line in hope that the right fish is out there, waiting to bite.

This is a reactive job-search strategy, where you the job seeker react to postings and try to model yourself as the best candidate for the job. Sometimes that's all it takes, but a truly effective job-search campaign incorporates proactive techniques as well.

You have already begun using the Web in a proactive manner. When you research your chosen field, for instance, to find the Web sites of the top companies, you are engaging in proactive research. Maybe the company you would most like to work for has several postings that are close to what you're looking for, but nothing that you feel qualified to apply for. You plan to keep checking back, but in the meantime why not write a quick e-mail to the contact person listed for that job. Tell him or her of your interest. Explain briefly how you believe you could be a real asset to the company. Close by saying you will keep in touch, and do it.

Another proactive technique on the employment e-frontier is a twist on our old favorite, networking. Online forums, chat groups, and mail groups cover almost any topic imaginable. They are easy enough to search out (try Yahoo!'s e-group listing, at *www.groups.yahoo.com*) and to join. You probably won't get any job offers, but you can learn a lot about your chosen field and the function you hope to perform in it.

A recent poll of college career services and corporate recruiters came up with fourteen favorite job-search sites. They include America's Job Bank (*www.aib.org*), Careerbuilder.com, CareerXRoads.com, Dice.com, Headhunter.net, Hotjobs.com, JobHuntersBible.com, Jobdirect.com, and Job-Hunt.org.

ONLINE APPLICATIONS

Postings and job bank sites and the actual Web sites of employers increasingly grant you the opportunity to apply for particular positions online. Original copy and paste e-forms are being replaced by PDF systems that allow for uploading of resumes formatted in graphically creative ways. You no longer have to remove bolding or italics, nor worry about tabs, justification, or where dates are

presented. But, even with these newer systems you should follow some essential advice.

- Always reflect knowledge of job description within qualification summaries.
- Don't hesitate to use actual phrases appearing in these announcements within summary sections that appear very early (after the objective) in your e-resume.
- Use cover letters created in the same document as the e-resume.
- Update and enhance keyword content of e-resumes.
- Follow up with phone calls and with additional e-mails.

Estimates regarding how many resumes are stored on or transmitted via Web-based resources vary. Some believe that the numbers of resumes stored in resume banks and connected to postings via mega job-search sites doubled each year over the past five years. While actual totals are difficult to confirm, almost all agree that millions of resumes are stored annually and tens-of-thousands are transmitted by e-mail daily.

Part 6

And Now a Word (or Two or Three) About Ethics

Turn on the television or radio, read a newspaper, get updates on current events on your PC, and the news is discouragingly the same: corruption, ethical violations, malfeasance in office, major companies ruined by corporate greed, high flying executives, and bankrupt pension funds and corporations. Ethical behavior seems more and more to be a concept foreign to public and business life.

But business and technical writers have moral and ethical obligations, and the essays in this final section of *Strategies* discuss some of the ethical issues we all face in writing for the world of work. The more general topic of ethics in business and industry is beyond the scope of this section or of this entire collection. What follows is meant to lay the groundwork for a continuing discussion in the classroom or the corporate setting.

Dorothy A. Winsor begins by examining the public documents available on the Challenger explosion to show how a "history of miscommunication" contributed to the accident. Her aim is to show how the dynamics at work in the Challenger case can help business and technical writers and managers reduce intentional or unintentional miscommunication in their own companies.