



# THE TOP OF THE STACK

Build the right résumé and they will call.

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YOU WANT YOUR CV to capture an employer's attention—so you load it with buzzwords and fancy fonts, right?

Turns out that could put you on the fast track to the recycling bin.

Companies that are actually hiring are overloaded with résumés, leaving candidates with mere minutes—or seconds—to make their case. Forget all that talk about your “keen ability to implement strategic fiscal processes in a fast-paced virtualized global environment.” Instead, “cut to the chase” and tell them how you worked with an international team to complete your last project two days ahead of schedule and €100,000 under budget. >>

## > TIP It might be time to call in the professionals.

"If you aren't getting interviews or you know you won't be able to create a good résumé, find a reputable career counselor to get help from," suggests Robin Ryan, a Seattle, Washington, USA-based career counselor and author.

But before you shell out US\$750 to US\$2,000 for the service, do your homework.

"Check their credentials, résumé samples and track record," advises Cheryl Palmer, Call to Career, Washington, D.C., USA.

"You must quickly sell your accomplishments and project results because résumés get glanced at and rejected fast," says Robin Ryan, a Seattle, Washington, USA-based career counselor and the author of *60 Seconds & You're Hired!* [Penguin, 2008].

In a 2009 survey by employment website CareerBuilder, 38 percent of 252 U.S. human resources professionals reported that they spent only a minute or two reviewing a new résumé. And 17 percent said they spent even less than that.

With those kinds of statistics, the pressure's on. It's time to take inventory of your accomplishments as a project manager and craft a résumé that conveys your talents—and does so quickly.

### FIRST THINGS FIRST

Companies need a reason to interview you, so don't make them have to hunt for it.

"You will grab their attention the moment they can find the information they need to validate a decision to interview you," says Debra Mills, a résumé writer at Pro-CV, an Edinburgh, Scotland-based CV writing service for job hunters. "Give it to them on a plate by presenting your relevant qualifications and experience near the beginning of your CV or résumé."

The summary should be four to six sentences, presenting an overview of accomplishments targeted to show a solid ability to fill the advertised position.

One of the biggest mistakes project professionals can make is simply listing duties.

"Project managers definitely need to show results," says Cheryl Palmer, president of Call to Career, an executive coaching and résumé writing company in Washington, D.C., USA. "It is not

enough to say that you managed a project. You need to demonstrate what happened as a result of your efforts. Perhaps you brought new business into your company because of the quality of work that you did. Maybe you turned around a failing project and completed it on time and under budget. Show how you made a contribution to the bottom line."

Stating project milestones and achievements lets companies see what they get out of the deal.

"If you focus on outcomes, you will be able to demonstrate your worth to the company," says Jason Bathe, head of staffing and recruitment at Bechtel, a global engineering, construction and project management firm in Frederick, Maryland, USA. "This is particularly important for the results-oriented engineering or construction industries."

### ONLY THE ESSENTIALS

Given the extent of some project managers' experience, it's easy for résumés to get bogged down with excess and irrelevant information.

"Project managers can often get caught up trying to describe their whole history and each individual project," says Roland Coombes, business manager at Itouch Professional Solutions, a résumé and CV writing service in Sydney, Australia. "To avoid these mishaps, you need to ask yourself, 'What is the job advertisement asking, and are the projects I'm listing on my résumé directly related to the job?' If not, it's time to trim the résumé down and refocus it toward transferable skills and experience."

If you're an advanced project manager with multiple pages of projects, highlight a few that really stand out. You can

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## > TIP Keep up-to-date with demand for specific qualifications, certifications and related skills.

"The market can change very quickly, so always make sure you have a résumé prepared for change," says Roland Coombes, Itouch Professional Solutions, Sydney, Australia.

# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

always refer hiring managers to your online portfolio and profile for more information, he suggests.

As companies launch projects around the world, it also pays to play up any global experience, Mr. Bathe says.

“Make sure to point out if any of the projects were international or involved managing a large multicultural work force,” he says. “Highlight everything that is different and will help you stand out among other résumés.”

## DON'T FORGET ABOUT DESIGN

It isn't just about finding the right words. Design and formatting can make or break a résumé.

“The biggest design mistake is to have no design at all,” Ms. Palmer says. “I have seen many résumés where it is clear that there was no thought given to the design. There was no real format and there was no visual distinction between the headings and the rest of the text.”

Outlining your projects and outcomes uniformly makes the document more reader-friendly and allows a potential employer to pull out key points.

Project managers also need to find the just the right amount of breathing room.

“Résumés with too much white space end up being unnecessarily lengthy, while résumés with too little white space look overcrowded,” Ms. Palmer says.

The length of your résumé will depend on how much experience you have in project management. If you're new to the profession, your résumé should be one page. Those who are advanced have more experience to highlight, but should still limit their résumé to two pages, tops. And they should put the most important information up high.

“Sometimes I see people dedicate almost all of the first page to the professional summary, core competencies and education,” Ms. Palmer says. “But the first page should contain at least some of the person's work experience. That is typically what employers are most interested in.”

When designing your résumé, consider the use of color carefully. As a

**DO: State your area of expertise.**  
e.g. Project Manager—Oil & Gas Industry

**DON'T: Be generic.**  
e.g. Project Manager

**DO: Use some white space.**

**DON'T: Cram too much information onto the page.**

**DO: Use common fonts (Arial, Times New Roman) and file types (Microsoft Word).**

You could be overlooked if hiring managers are unable to open your résumé on their computers or if the document is not readable.

**DON'T: Use creative fonts or uncommon file types.**

general rule of thumb, project professionals should opt for dark text to present a business-like image.

And don't forget about font.

“Easy-to-scan is an important design feature, so avoid using all upper case letters, underlining and more than two fonts, which can impede this. If you use two fonts, use one serif and one sans serif,” Ms. Mills says. “Also, do not choose a font that is uncommon. If the recipient doesn't have it, his or her computer could replace your wonderful font with an unsuitable one.”

Keep an unformatted version for copying and pasting into online applications, too.

Before you send your carefully crafted résumé to a potential employer, there's one more task that could mean the difference between getting a callback and ending up in the trash bin: “Proofread, proofread, proofread,” Ms. Palmer says. All of your hard work will be wasted if your document contains even one grammatical error or typo.

You might consider yourself ideal for a job—but without a great résumé you won't ever get the chance to prove it. PM

