

Refining Your Resume

Polished Presentation

Resumés, whether professional or for shidduch purposes, are often thought of as cold and impersonal lists of facts that cannot possibly reflect the true value of the people they describe. Nonetheless, in the job market, a resumé is a non-negotiable essential — you won't get an interview without one — and in the shidduch world, for better or for worse, they're becoming commonplace for boys and girls alike. How can you compile a resumé that best showcases who you are and what you have to offer? And how do you get around the flaws inherent in reducing yourself to mere sentences and statistics?

Customizing Professional Resumés

“The most important thing to remember about a resumé is that its purpose is to get you a job interview,” says Leah Aharoni, a business coach with experience helping female entrepreneurs in the U.S. and Israel expand their client base. “I usually compare the hiring process to playing with a sorting toy. When applying for a job, you need to decide what shape you are — that is, your strengths and abilities — and then write a resumé that underlines how these unique abilities make you the perfect fit for the job opening.”

“A resumé needs to be customized for each type of position that you apply for,” recommends Jennifer Bloom, senior editor and resumé writer at Blue Sky Resumés and Accepted.com, a U.S.-based college application editing service and admissions consultancy.

“I know that some candidates do not have the patience to tailor their resumés to the positions they are applying for,” points out Miriam Last, human resource manager at the Yerushalayim branch of Innodata, a services company headquartered in New Jersey. “However, doing so can be the difference between a recruiter disregarding your resumé or calling you to see if you are a relevant candidate.”

“Keep a few versions of your resumé saved on your computer,” suggests Naomi Elbinger, a web marketer and entrepreneur, who provides marketing and business advice with a Jewish focus. “When applying for a job, pick the version that is most appropriate and then revise it slightly to emphasize those parts of your experience that fit in with that job opportunity. The idea is to adjust the emphasis to make it clear that you have the necessary expertise for the particular job you are applying for.”

Content

When describing your prior work experience, focus on your achievements and their results, rather than simply listing your

If you know someone who already works in the company where you are applying, submit your resumé through her. Hiring managers frequently pay more attention to suitable candidates referred by current employees.

responsibilities. “Let’s face it; that gets repetitive!” says Leah. “The way to highlight the relevance of your experience is to show what you have contributed to your previous employers.”

“I usually suggest the following exercise to help clearly articulate what your contributions were in a previous workplace. Ask yourself, ‘If a hiring manager were to call my previous boss

and ask about my three most important contributions to the workplace, what would the boss say?’ You want to provide a verbal before-and-after picture. If you can express that in numbers, all the better. For example, you can say that you researched and implemented a new customer relationship management (CRM) system, which led to a 30% increase in client retention and a 15% increase in sales.”

“The wording in your resumé should emphasize the same skills that the job-opening advertisement highlighted,” Jennifer explains. “Many organizations use software to analyze each resumé that is submitted before any person actually reads it. Hiring managers will decide what key words they are looking for and program the software to select the top resumés that most mention those phrases.”

A good idea is to have someone else review your resumé and then ask her what position she thinks you are applying for. If she identifies the field or type of position, you know you are on the right track.

Miriam Last

Miriam cautions candidates to double-check that all contact information is accurate and up to date; if an employer can’t get through to you because the phone numbers you provided aren’t accurate, he is unlikely to pursue you via email; he’ll just move on to the next resumé in the pile.

“Many people make the mistake of including their personal information (marital status, number of children, place of residence, etc.),” says Leah. “Don’t do that. Employees use resumés to weed out anyone who is not a good fit via a process of elimination. Don’t give them an excuse to chuck your resumé because of their preconceived notions or biases.”

Formatting and Layout

“Recruiters are usually under a crunch when trying to fill a position and won’t have the time to review your resumé and pick out the relevant information,” says Miriam. Thus it is important that your resumé is specific and concise, and that the layout is simple and easy to follow.

“Use a single font for the entire resumé and make sure your headings are marked either through an outline, or in bold or italics,” Miriam suggests. “Use one

consistent bullet point throughout the document and do not complicate the resumé by adding unnecessary charts or graphs. Resumés that are too lengthy or complicated are a turn-off. And make sure to do a spelling and grammar check!”

“The length of your resumé should be dependent on the number of years of experience you have. If you’ve had over five

years of work experience, then you can use two pages. But if you are a new graduate or you have been with one organization for several years, it’s best to stick to one page,” advises Jennifer.

References

“I always ask for and contact at least two professional references,” says Miriam. “You would be amazed at the information you can glean from a reference! One tip I have for job candidates is to make sure the references you provide will give you a positive review — you should not take for granted that this is the case.”

Professional Resumé Writers

“It is certainly acceptable to use a professional resumé writer to help you formulate your resumé,” says Miriam.

“I highly recommend using a certified professional resumé writer,” Jennifer agrees. “We know what hiring professionals are looking for, and we keep up with changing trends.” For example, until recently many job applicants included an objective statement — a sentence outlining one’s professional aspirations — at the beginning of a resumé. Today, that is out.

Professional resumé writers are also experts in wording resumés to make the greatest impact, and can help you handle holes in your record effectively, such as years away from work to raise a family, or work experience that, while relevant, is years old.

Shidduch Resumés

Why the popularity?

“A shidduch resumé is a practical way to have all the facts about you on hand,” says Chani Roth*, a young married woman now involved in shadchanus. “It’s essentially a write-up of basic information about the shidduch prospect and his/her family, including the shuls, schools, seminaries, and yeshivos that family members attend, their occupations, and a

list of references.”

“Having all that information written up means you don’t have to constantly give people the lowdown. It’s convenient just to be able to hand them a piece of paper,” says Menucha Grossberg*, a young woman in her twenties who has just entered the shidduch parashah. It’s also useful to have your own verified facts circulating, rather than someone else’s best guess about how old you are or which seminary you attended.

“Years ago, you had the community matchmaker, and she knew the hundred single girls in her shtetl,” explains Mrs. Freyda Leah Falik, a matchmaker with the Simcha Link shidduch service, a division of the Chicago Chesed Fund. “Today, the yeshivishe population has exploded, and the community is widespread. Shadchanim need resumés to keep track of all the people out there.”

Mrs. Lisa Elefant, a shadchan with Boro Park’s renowned Binyan Adey Ad shidduch organization, estimates that resumés became popular in the yeshivishe community six or seven years ago. Her colleague, Mrs. Ruchie Giberstein, puts it at eight years ago for girls and five

Getting Your Resumé Noticed

A good way to ensure that your resumé is noticed and read is to send it out to people and companies that have not advertised a job opening. Often an organization may be looking to fill a position, but will be reluctant to deal with the flood of resumés (many of them low quality) that inundates them every time they advertise a position. So make a list of people, companies, and organizations you would ideally like to work for, and email them your resumé, or drop it off at their office in person.

Naomi Elbinger

years ago for boys, and cites convenience as the reason behind their popularity; in our fast-paced world, it is more efficient to be able to hand out a sheet of facts rather than constantly repeat the information.

In chassidische circles, shidduch resumés are less commonly

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used, although they are growing in popularity, says Mrs. Devorah Rottenberg*, a well-known *shadchan* in Brooklyn. *Shidduchim* are usually made within the *Chassidus*, where the community is close-knit, so families are usually aware of the basic facts about one another, and if they are not, will usually have a mutual friend or acquaintance they can use as a resource for information. There also isn't as wide a variation in *hashkafah* or life goals, making personal sections not as necessary. "Often, all you really need to find out is the girl's first name," Mrs. Rottenberg says. But she herself began using resumés several years ago, as she deals



communities, schools, and yeshivos, leading *shadchanim* and well-meaning friends and family to set up a girl or boy based on who they think the person is and what they think the person is looking for in a spouse, rather than who they really are. For example, Ruchoma Lebovitz* grew up in a chassidishe home, but after seminary, chose a more yeshivish path for herself. She expresses frustration that based on the community her family affiliates with and the schools she went to, *shadchanim* set her up with an entirely different kind of boy than she is looking for. "I wish people would look at me, at my *hashkofos* and personality, rather than at a list of information," she laments.

Shidduch Resumé Writing 101

Make sure to include:

- Name
- D.O.B.
- Height
- Schools and yeshivos/seminary attended
- Place of employment
- Parents' names
- Parents' occupations
- Shul family attends
- Siblings' names, ages, schools/yeshivos/seminaries attended, occupations, names of spouses (if applicable)
- References — family friend, personal friend, high school teacher, seminary teacher/mashgiach, mentor, family Rav, neighbor

Optional

- Self-description — including a synopsis of your personality, hobbies and interests, *hashkofos*, future goals and aspirations,

professional plans (e.g., completing a degree, working, staying at home to raise the family).

- A paragraph describing what you're looking for in a spouse in terms of *hashkafah*, personality, specific *middos* and personal characteristics (e.g., a leader, someone who takes initiative), future professional plans (employment, learning, pursuing a degree).
- In chassidishe communities, information about grandparents is also often included, as well as maiden names of mothers and grandmothers.
- Avoid lists of things you don't want and leave out physical descriptions of yourself and your ideal future spouse — they can make you come across as superficial.
- As with a job resumé, presentation is important, so make sure to do a spelling and grammar check, and have a clear and easy-to-read layout.

That's where the sections on a resumé describing oneself and what one is looking for in a spouse become very important. They enable people to look past demographic information and see you as a unique individual, raising the likelihood that you will be set up with someone compatible with who you are and where you are heading.

Aleeza Ben Shalom — or the Marriage-Minded Mentor, as she is known — is a *shadchan*, dating mentor, and the author of *Get Real Get Married*, a dating guide for marriage-minded singles. She views these sections of a resumé as the most important sections. "Even if you don't hand out this section to anyone, it's a great idea to write it up, as it's a good road map for you," Aleeza says.

"I liked writing up these two sections," concurs Menucha. "It forced me to do some introspection and work out who I am and what I am looking for."

However, not everyone likes to rely extensively on *shidduch* resumés. Gittel Nadel is a *shadchan* in Yerushalayim with twenty-five years of experience. She has made close to

with "out-of-the box types" and needs to get a picture of who the person is, and because she found them to be very efficient, saving her the time and effort of recording all the information while parents are talking to her, so that she is free to concentrate on what they're really saying about their child.

Circumventing the Pitfalls

Despite the obvious benefits of *shidduch* resumés, there are potential drawbacks. Describing oneself as a list of facts and demographics can reinforce assumptions based on

seventy *shidduchim*; most of these couples married the first or second person she set them up with. "People send me their *shidduch* resumés, and I tell them it is almost meaningless to me. Setting people up requires getting a *chush*, a real sense, for the person, and I acquire that through an intensive hour-and-a-half-long interview. I ask questions like 'What can you bring of yourself into a marriage?' and 'What is something about yourself, something that no one else knows about you, that you would tell your spouse?' Sometimes I will invite a client to my Shabbos table. I don't feel you can get that *chush* through reading something someone has written — you need to meet the