

How to Write a Powerful Resume Summary Statement

Many resumes still start out with an antiquated objective statement that focuses on what the job seeker hopes to gain from a job, and usually ends up telling a prospective employer a bunch of stuff they already know or would assume. We recommend replacing your ineffective objective statement with a powerful summary statement. Here's why.

The Benefit of a Resume Summary Statement

A resume summary statement is a short summary of a professional's value proposition to a prospective employer. It's like a sales pitch with bite. It contains information that makes the professional stand out, while still focusing on things the employer wants to know such as technical skills and relevant competencies.

The summary statement serves as a powerful introduction to the reader using just a few lines of text. It's located at the top of your resume--right where a hiring manager or recruiter looks first.

A powerful summary statement will help your resume stand out in the following ways:

- 1. It immediately catches a resume reviewer's attention.
- 2. It emphasizes your key strengths and quickly communicates your career highlights.
- 3. A summary statement quickly and concisely communicates your top selling points. This is very important given that most hiring managers only take a few seconds to quickly scan resumes.
- 4. It indirectly communicates your professional objective.

While resume summary statements are a good addition to any resume, they're particularly beneficial for:

- **Recent College Graduates** - Recent college graduates, without a lot of targeted work experience, typically pursue a variety of job opportunities. The resume summary statement allows you the ability to highlight skills relevant to each position and customize your resume for each job opportunity.
- **Mid-life Career Changers** - Summary statements provide career changers the ability to highlight transferable skills quickly. Alternatively, a hiring manager may only see your most recent work experience and determine you're not qualified for the position you're applying to.
- **Professionals with Diverse Work Experience** - Again, a summary statement allows you to tailor your resume for each position. It allows you to highlight the most relevant experience, skills, and career accomplishments where they can't be missed--at the top of your resume. This is important for those with diverse backgrounds who have a work history that doesn't communicate a clear career path.

The Basics of a Strong Resume Summary Statement

An effective summary statement will include a short title and just a few lines of text. Anything more than this and the statement loses its ability to grab the reader's attention and quickly communicate the desired message. The summary can be in paragraph form or consist of a few bullets. It should be positioned at the top of the first page of your resume just under the contact information.

The title of the summary statement is bolded and communicates your "professional identity". It catches the reader's attention and tells them in just a few words who you are--from a professional perspective. It should help position you as a good fit for the position you're apply for. Examples include Product Marketing Manager, Project Manager, Management Consultant, and Internet Marketing Strategist.

Again, the summary statement should be relatively short, approximately 3-4 lines of text. Overcome the temptation to make it any longer. You only have a couple seconds to communicate your message.

A resume summary statement should not be written using the first-person pronouns "I" or "me".

Example Resume Summary Statements

Below you'll find several examples of powerful resume summary statements and titles.

EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST

Top-performing, strategic-thinking professional with ten years' experience in employment services in non-profit and higher education sectors. Highly skilled at needs assessment, generating options and implementing cost effective employee acquisition solutions. Experienced in all phases of recruitment and hiring, including skills assessment and candidate evaluation.

PROJECT MANAGER

Self-motivated project manager with over 10 years of experience managing multiple projects simultaneously. Extensive expertise in managing multifaceted construction projects ranging from in-patient rehabilitation centers to large community living developments. Highly skilled in needs assessment, quality assurance, managing suppliers, communicating deadlines and completing projects under budget.

MARKETING ASSOCIATE (recent college grad)

Motivated marketing professional with experience in product development and marketing. Currently pursuing BS in Marketing. Proven ability to tackle difficult marketing projects and provide meaningful results. High level of expertise in SPSS market segmentation analysis and new product marketing.

TECHNICAL WRITER

Detail-oriented technical writer with over 15 years' experience rendering technical details and specifications into readable/usable documentation. Strong background in technical support with exceptional written communication, editing and proofreading skills.

Tips for Writing Your Resume Summary Statement

You'd think that writing a resume summary statement is straight forward, and for the most part it is. But you must plan carefully. It's the most important aspect of your resume but uses the least amount of space. Your summary statement must be concise, yet powerful. It must clearly and quickly communicate the strongest elements of you as a professional.

The following are more tips for developing your resume summary statement.

- **What defines you?** What is it that defines you professionally? What sets you apart from other professionals in your industry? This could be an exceptional record as a project manager, a strong sales record, expertise in CAD design, or the ability to negotiate large deals. If you're a recent college grad this could be as simple (or powerful) as the ability to perform market segmentation analysis using the latest SPSS software.
- **What drives you?** What is it that drives you to do well at what you do? What motivates you to go to work each day? Why are in your chosen career path? Your summary statement doesn't just tell prospective employers what you're good at, it communicates what you enjoy doing day to day. Don't write a summary statement that says you're good at something that you don't want to do. You just might end up doing it.
- **Customize your summary statement for the job.** Before developing your summary statement thoroughly familiarize yourself with the position you're apply for. Identify the skills you want to focus on and make sure they're in line with the skills required of the position. Try and align your skills with those required of the position for which you're applying.
- **Avoid irrelevant selling points.** You may have been the fastest typist in your graduating class but if you're not applying to be a court reporter it probably isn't relevant. Don't include irrelevant information in your summary statement, even if it's impressive. The summary statement is for strengths and accomplishments that are directly related to your position, and that will help you stand out from other job candidates.
- **Avoid using first person pronouns.** Write the resume summary statement in present tense, as if you're the subject of the resume. This pulls the focus away from you and places it on the employer. Use of the pronouns "I", "me" and "my" directs the focus on the applicant, not the employer.

Remember, the resume summary statement is the first thing on your resume that a hiring manager will read. It's also your best shot at making a good first impression before you meet anyone in person- so make it count.