

Resumes that Pop

By Kelly Smith, Editorial Nancy Trypuc

Country Western star Dolly Parton is world famous for her musical talent, songwriting ability and business acumen ... making her one of the most successful women in music history. What you may not know about is the grassroots movement to honor her: *WWDS? - What Would Dolly Say?* She has become a legend in her own right for her famous quotes.

When it comes to resume writing, it's very important to intrinsically be aware of your strengths. If your strengths do not come through on your resume, being selected for an interview will be tough because you'll come across as a jack-of-all trades.

While 'It's hard to be a diamond in a rhinestone world' is one of our favorites Dolly lines, the following is more suitable.

Find out who you are and do it on purpose. – Dolly Parton

Know Your Strengths

What are the top 3 areas where you consider yourself having strong content knowledge?

Exercise

- Think through the top 3 skills where your talents and achievements mostly reside. These are the skills that a hiring leader will be looking for when they are trying to fill the job requirements for a role in their organization.
- These top 3 skills should be reflective throughout your resume. Other skills can be included, but they should not be highlighted so much that they minimize the impact of your top 3 skills.

Example

If you're a software developer, most likely one of your top skills is programming, so it's important to highlight roles where you've used this skill. This informs the hiring entity you offer the experience for a programming role they are trying to fill.

Structure of the Resume

The rules around formatting have changed over time. Pretty much any format is acceptable.

3 Things to Keep in Mind When Picking a Format

- Don't be so creative that the hiring entity can't find the information they are looking for, nobody is interested in guessing what you're good at. It's okay to use your creativity, but don't go over the top and end up confusing the reader.
- Human attention span has deteriorated 33% over the last 20 years, so make sure you hit your top 3 skills in the top half of the first page or you've already lost their interest.

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- **Font, Font, Font.** Keep it professional and stay away from mouse type. Don't use odd ball font types, like *Chiller*. It may seem fun and quirky at the time, but your audience will think twice about your decision-making skills. Half the population can barely read mouse type without glasses, so do you really want to exclude half your audience from knowing the wonderful skills you've amassed throughout your career?

Content & Style of the Resume

Here are some ideas for what should be included in your resume.

- Schooling is less important the further you are into your career, so move it to the bottom if you've been in the workforce for more than 5 years. No description of your degree or what was included in the course of study is necessary anymore. Hiring entities now only care about your work experience.
- Have a couple of fun facts about yourself. These are always good ice breakers, and adding something personal makes you relatable and the interviewer can see if you'll fit in with the other members of the team. Mention dogs or maybe a classic car. Steer away from facts like climbing Mount Everest, that's more for a dating site, and most likely your interviewer has not done the same.
- Remove or minimize the importance of jobs that have no bearing on your ability to do the job you're applying for, or they do not highlight the top 3 skills you've identified about yourself. If you must include it to avoid gaps in timeline, then make it quick. Two sentences at best.
- Use plain English. Write sentences that sound like a human wrote them, not a robot. Don't make the mistake of putting too much on your resume (ie. fluff) and therefore not leaving enough for the conversation.

Use the KISS philosophy – Keep It Simple, Silly.

Exercise

- Read each sentence on your resume and take out any filler words like 'that' or 'however'; minimize the use of adjectives, and if the sentence doesn't highlight one of your 3 key skills, reconsider if it needs to be there.
 - Now read each sentence on your resume out-loud. Anytime you hit a sentence where you have to take another breath before finishing it, this needs to be shortened. Anytime you read a sentence that a layperson can't understand, you're not writing in plain English.
 - Use words on your resume that people in your industry can relate to, usually this involves your top 3 skills.
- Don't bullet point laundry list your resume. If each job you include has a new bullet point for each line, you've got a problem. You will not come across as a strategic thinker, but a task doer. Important Note: strategic thinkers make more money.

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Example

How a Task Doer Writes a Resume

- Create and run monthly reports for revenue for each product
- Track invoices for multiple divisions, and follow up on Accounts Receivables
- Field questions from clients and work with partners troubleshoot payment issues

How a Strategic Thinker Writes a Resume

- Responsible for all aspects of accounts receivable in our Global Product Division. Establish programs and build operational procedures to minimize AR days outstanding. Working directly with internal and external partners, continually identify opportunities to enhance the program.

Your resume is the first impression hiring leaders have of you, so spend some time making sure it reflects you and all the wonderful accomplishments you've achieved.

So go out there and make Dolly proud.