



What You Need To Know Before Hiring A Professional Resume

The Internet's Résumé & Career Marketing Specialists...Since 1996

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If you have been conducting a job search recently, you know how incredibly competitive the job market is right now. To really stand out from the masses, to win interviews, and to get the job offer, you have to give yourself every available edge possible. For those job searchers truly interested in conducting a fast, successful search, that includes a professionally written resume.

Especially right now, when unemployment is so high, promoting yourself with a professionally written resume has become almost a necessity-not a luxury!

But, how do you hire a professional resume writer? Not all resume writers are equal in talent and experience. How do you make your choice? Here are a few guidelines to help you.



Review work samples

Would you commission a custom painting without ever having seen the artist's work? Would you hire an advertising agency to promote a new product without having reviewed examples of past ad campaigns? Of course not! Resume writing is a craft that requires a very unique blend of creativity, writing skills, and current knowledge of the job market and constantly changing trends. True professional resume writing firms never use templates.

Each and every resume they create is as unique as the individual client. While it won't be identical to your future resume, you can still tell a lot about the quality of work produced by viewing examples of past resume projects. Many resume writers publish examples of their resumes online and a handful are contributors to published books on resume writing.

Check credentials

There are several national organizations devoted to the education and professional development of resume writers. Each of these organizations offers their own version of training and certification programs. While there are good writers who remain uncertified, choosing a certified resume writer ensures that you will be working with a trained, experienced, tested professional. Do be aware that some certifications are more rigorous than others. The best have prerequisites for writers, test various areas of competence, use a blind grading process, and have CEU requirements to maintain certification.



Check references

There is a very valid, honest reason that many professional resume writers will hesitate when asked to provide references. Professional ethics and client confidentiality concerns prevent those of us who care about such things from providing the names of past clients. However, most professionals who are able to will provide testimonial letters written by past clients, using just the clients' initials, location, and job title or industry to help protect their clients' identities

LinkedIn profiles are another great place to look for references from past clients. If the writer you are thinking of working with has a LinkedIn presence, past clients may have voluntarily written references, and in these cases, the references are linked to a real person by name. Be extremely wary of working with a professional resume writer who is unable to provide you any references.



Have a written agreement and understand what is included

The agreement doesn't need to be fancy or written in legalese, but it is always a good idea to have a written agreement. That way, you can be sure that you clearly understand the resume writer's process and policies, and be sure that there are no misunderstandings about what is to be delivered and what the charges will be. Does the writer offer other services? Is he or she able to assist you with job search letters or other documents?

Are they included in the fee or separate? Will you be given access to the computer files so that you can send your resume electronically or make minor updates yourself? Are there any other value-add services bundled with the project? Can the writer assist with future resume updates?



Does the writer offer any other services that you might need, such as resume distribution or job search coaching? How does the writer gather information to write the resume? What if corrections or changes are needed before you can use the resume? What are the fees associated with all of this and what is the payment schedule? Make sure you know the answers to these questions before you hire a writer.

Understand the guarantee

Remember that a resume is a tool, and even the best tool in the world will be ineffective if it is used inappropriately. Once a resume has left the resume writer's office, it is completely out of that writer's control how that resume will be used-or not used. If a writer claims to guarantee a job or even interviews, be wary and read the fine print closely.



While some might try to offer this guarantee with good intentions, most know it isn't a realistic guarantee and will make you jump through hoops to prove how you have used the resume before allowing you to collect. Others more realistically guarantee that you will be satisfied with the quality of the service and the deliverables. Whatever the guarantee, if any, just be sure you understand it.

Think and plan ahead

It is not a good idea to procrastinate! If you are currently in a job search or are expecting to conduct a job search soon, don't put off hiring a professional resume writer until you have a job that you want to apply for or have a recruiter requesting it. Quality takes time and the truly good resume writers are in demand and usually booked in advance. Give yourself time to research and select the best writer for the job and then plan for at least an additional two weeks for turnaround of the finished project.



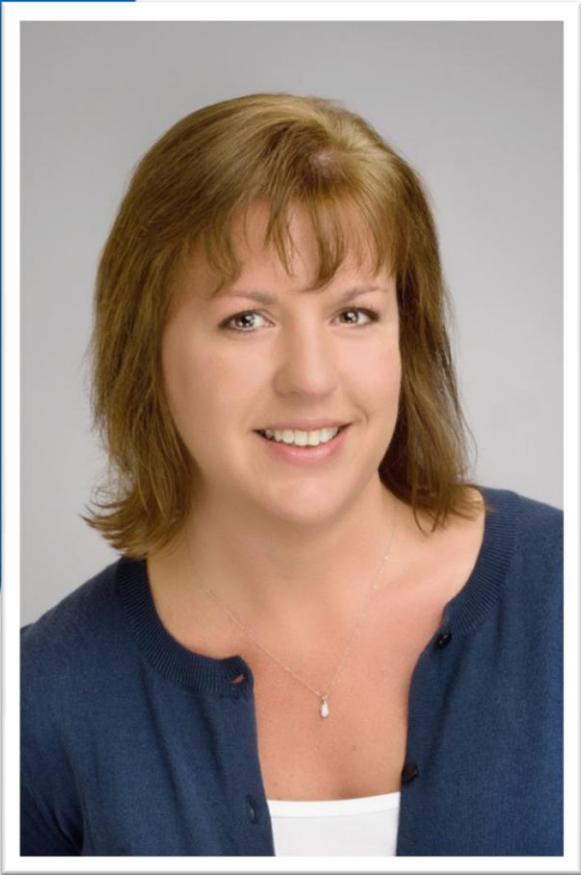
Understand that you will get what you pay for

In discussing certifications and the need to check work samples, I alluded to this issue. In most states there are no licensing requirements for a resume writer. Anyone with a computer can put up a website, and start calling himself a professional resume writer. Sadly, there are many examples of unqualified people doing this and unknowing job seekers who have been “burned” by them. Does the person you are thinking of hiring have a credible web presence? Do they belong to professional associations? Attend regular trainings and conferences? Have articles they have written or example resumes that have been published?



In short, not all resume writers are equal, and those who are the experienced, respected experts in the field charge appropriately for their craft. The fee range is pretty broad, but it would not be uncommon to pay somewhere in the \$400-\$1200 range to have a professional resume written. Generally, the complexity of your project will have an impact on the fee charged.

Some charge more and some charge less, but if it is significantly less, you might want to ask yourself why that is. Does the writer really have the experience he or she claims to have? Be especially wary about working with some of the high-volume companies that outsource all the work to inexperienced writers to whom they usually pay ridiculously low wages to produce resumes of questionable quality.



Michelle Dumas runs of one of the longest-standing and most respected professional résumé writing firms on the internet, Distinctive Career Services, LLC (dba Distinctive Documents). Since 1996, Michelle has empowered thousands of professionals with résumés that get results and win jobs fast. Get insider résumé writing tips that you won't find anywhere else at her website. Go now to www.distinctiveweb.com

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