

their writing. The fourth article, by K. Virginia Hemby, provides advice on using the World Wide Web to teach employment communication. The final article updates our techniques for teaching another important job search skill: interviewing. Jay Lundelius and Emma Poon describe a role-playing exercise that helps students practice the skills they need to be convincing in this stressful but exciting situation.

—DCA/MAD



Preparing a Scannable Résumé

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SCANNING TECHNOLOGY is transforming the way companies process résumés. The use of this new technology has significant implications for résumé design because the software cannot easily digest traditionally prepared résumés. This article briefly describes this role of scanners in corporate recruitment and then provides advice on designing résumés that will be read by a computer before they are read by a person.

Scanners in Corporate Recruitment

Although different scanning programs exist, they work essentially the same way. Résumés are scanned and held in the computer's memory. When a job opens, company personnel identify key words that reflect the skills needed for that position. The software then scans the résumés in an attempt to match the key words for the position with the text of the résumés. Résumés that pass the "match" test are identified and sometimes even prioritized according to the number of matches or "hits."

In an effort to increase efficiency, many international and local companies are now using these computer software programs. For example, in the United Kingdom, résumé scanning software "is nothing that will materialise in the future; it is being used already in this country." A recent survey in Britain "indicates that 17 per cent of the

124 respondents currently use computer systems for recruitment. Of those surveyed, 75 per cent expected to be using such systems within the next three to five years" (Theaker, 1995, p. 35). Resumix, one of the leaders in computer-scanning technology, boasts of "successful expansion into new international markets including Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Pacific Rim (<http://www.resumix.com/new/944results.html>).

In the United States, the picture is mixed. In a 1996 survey, none of the human resource professionals in 236 companies in a city of less than 100,000 in rural, northwest Missouri said they used résumé-scanning software. Three individuals in the survey expected to use the software in the future, and three said "maybe" they would use it. Most of the individuals in the survey were not aware of the résumé-scanning technology, although the software was used in a nearby major city. The results from that survey, however, contrast with other findings. Kennedy and Morrow (1995), for example, found that almost all companies with more than 1,000 employees were automated. Typically, these larger companies purchase the software, which is operated by company employees.

Smaller companies are also using the software. "The Association of Human Resource Systems Professionals in a 1994 study of nearly 400 companies found that 4 out of 10 companies with fewer than 1,000 workers were using automated applicant tracking systems to keep tabs on people who apply for employment" (Kennedy & Morrow, 1995, p. 11). Companies not willing to invest in the software can also use the technology by contracting with electronic job banks that identify appropriate candidates for the company. Kennedy and Morrow (1995) caution job candidates, "Just because you are applying to a small company, don't assume your résumé will not be read by a computer" (p. 13). The trend toward using scanning equipment seems indisputable.

Résumé Design for Scanning

The new technology has significant implications for the design of résumés. It demands plain-speaking résumés that present information without flair or flourish. These résumés may not be attractive to the human eye but are very easy on the computer's "eye." Several sources provide advice on designing for the computers eye: Kennedy and

Morrow (1995) share "15 power tips for winners" (p. 92), Peter Weddle (1995) illustrates the "Good, the Bad & the Ugly" scannable résumés, Resumix's home page provides "Tips for Maximizing 'Hits'" and the company publishes a brochure entitled "Preparing the Ideal Scannable Résumé." Here are highlights of this advice:

- 1 Length is not significant, because the computer doesn't tire when scanning several pages. The candidate's name should appear at the top of each page.
- 2 Special effects should be limited to capitalization and bold headings. Italics, underlining, boxes, columns, or shaded areas should be avoided because they can confuse the electronic "eye"
- 3 Font size should be 10-14 point (although some sources recommend only 12 or 14 point)
4. Because the electronic eye can be confused by creases, the résumé should be mailed flat. And because staples must be removed before the résumé is scanned, the pages should not be stapled
- 5 Only originals on white paper with black ink should be submitted

In addition to these design features, scannable résumés also feature new content. While traditional category headings continue to be appropriate (objective, education, and work experience), a new heading is critical. Keyword Summary This is a paragraph that follows the candidate's personal information and objective and which contains approximately 25

key words [which] are occupation-specific and describe learned bodies of information . . . a typical key word search for a human resources candidate might include such phrases as *salary and benefits administration, training and development, affirmative action, executive compensation, union liaison, recruiting, salary survey*, among others (Kennedy & Morrow, 1995, p. 114)

The candidate obviously wants to use key words that match the words entered into the scanning program as those experiences relevant to the position. Industry-specific jargon and acronyms are especially welcome.

Not all companies use scanners, so students need to know how to prepare both a traditional and a scannable résumé. An unanswered question is whether they should send both forms to a potential employer. Some sources hedge the answer by suggesting that students

send a scannable résumé in response to a job listing but take a traditional résumé to the interview.



Preparing an Online Résumé

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THIS ARTICLE focuses on how to situate online résumés in a job search strategy. Because of the limited scope of this article, I offer “<http://omni.cc.purdue.edu/~Etkrause>” as a Web site for finding more examples of online résumés (use the “Online Résumé” link) as well as a collection of resources for writing, designing, and advertising online résumés (use the “Directions” link).

In the job-search unit, I teach students how to write application letters and various forms of résumés, and I familiarize them with the general types of readers for their résumés: the *scanning* reader (person or computer) who makes initial cuts and the *close* reader who selects interviewees. Typically, the instruction ends with advice on requesting the first interview.

Recently, however, we have extended our instruction to discuss how the online résumé relates to both first and subsequent interviews. Consider the first screen of the online résumé in Figure 1. At the top level, it provides the first-time reader with information common to one-page versions of the résumé: scannable headings, or buttons, and an objective statement that function much the same way as those found on a traditional one-page or machine-scannable résumé. The online résumé, however, uses links to other screens that expand upon, and defer, the information that one might include in a one-page version.

Online, then, the student can make the résumé interactive and add or delete materials as the ongoing relationship with a potential employer suggests. For example, as part of the education section, students may link to scanned blueprints of projects, sample financial plans, multimedia files from performing arts, and other online documents. As part of a work-experience section, they may provide more

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