



HOW TO EFFECTIVELY UTILIZE A SUMMARY SECTION IN YOUR RESUME

A section that summarizes your key attributes is an important opening section of a resume. When employers receive upwards of 100 resumes per day for an advertised position, they do not have much time to devote to each one. Rather than just informing an employer about your history, a brief, well-written summary will highlight your relevant strengths, grab the employer's attention, and make him or her want to continue reading the rest of your resume in more detail. The summary can bring attention to skills that are most relevant to the position you are seeking, especially if they are not reflected by your most recent position. The information contained in the top third of your resume is what will attract the most attention. For this reason, a summary is a great way to ensure that the top third represents everything you want employers to know about you.

A summary also will allow you to condense lengthy experience and save employers from having to weed through extensive job descriptions. If you can encapsulate your experience in a few brief sentences, it will take some of the guesswork out of the employer's

hands. Then once he/she has decided to consider you and not the other 99 candidates, he/she can go back and read your job descriptions in more detail.

Additionally, if you have a few large, notable accomplishments, why not put them at the very top of your resume? If you won a notable award, went to a great law school, graduated at the top of your class, worked at a prestigious law firm, or won an impressive case, you can increase the prominence of these achievements by listing them in the summary section. Starting your resume with "President of the Harvard Law Review" is sure to get an employer's attention, and you have not even made him or her look past the first line.

A summary can also reduce repetition in your job descriptions. If you find that several of your positions comprised virtually the same responsibilities, rather than repeat those responsibilities under each job heading, include them in a summary section. This will not only free up some space on your resume, it will bring more focus to the unique contributions you have made in each position.

If you find your resume lacking a certain "punch" or if you do not feel that your best or most relevant attributes are coming through, a summary section can enhance your product. The easier you can make it for employers to quickly see your best qualities, the better chance you have of getting an interview.

A. Profile

A profile is a paragraph that gives a brief overview of your career. You can use this section to pull together each aspect of your professional history in one place, from academic information to honors and awards to practice areas to foreign language abilities. You can also highlight skills in your profile. Since cover letters often are overlooked or skimmed, using a profile section ensures that those less-tangible qualities that you want to highlight will be seen. Remember, though, that the skills you mention should be supported by your resume. If you bill yourself as a “strong negotiator” in your profile, there should be evidence of this in your job description. Here are some examples:

PROFILE

Highly experienced health care attorney with a joint J.D. and Master's in Public Health from Emory University. Acknowledged subject matter expert and published author, frequently called upon to make presentations to other professionals. Practice focuses on corporate and transactional aspects of health care law, as well as regulatory compliance. Admitted to practice in Atlanta, South Carolina, and the District of Columbia.

A profile can even be one sentence:

“Fully licensed Insurance General Counsel with extensive litigation, claims adjustment, and underwriting experience.”

B. Summary of Qualifications

This section is similar to a Profile, but rather than using it to summarize your entire career, it can highlight those specific aspects of your experience that relate to the position you are currently seeking. A Summary of Qualifications can be particularly helpful if you have dabbled in a certain area throughout your career and now want to focus on that area. For instance, maybe you have done labor and employment work “here and there” throughout your legal career, but it has only made up about 15% of your overall experience. If you decide that you now want to focus on that area, a Summary of Qualifications section will allow you to put that 15% in one place. Consider these two examples:

Summary of Qualifications

- Currently enrolled in M.S. program in human resources.
- Assisting law professor at University of Chicago with research on articles relating to employment law
- Summer Associate at a well-respected Chicago labor & employment law firm.
- Authored Employment Law Seminar paper: *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: The New Rules(2003); Workman's Compensation Laws and Their Effect on Hospital Billing Practices (2002).*

Summary of Qualifications

- Juris Doctor with Concentration in Health Law from Santa Anita School of Law.
- Master's degree in Health Administration.
- Presented seminar to undergraduates on issues such as HIPAA, Health Care Fraud and Abuse, and Stark Laws.
- Represented indigent clients' health care concerns as a student attorney for the Santa Anita Law School's Health Law Clinic.
- Two years of experience as an intern for the Miracle Heights Medical Center's Managed Care Department.

C. Areas of Expertise

Another form that a summary section can take is the Areas of Expertise section. A list of a few key legal areas is visually striking while, again, taking some of the guesswork out of your resume. Someone in a hurry can easily assess the areas in which you are experienced. The Areas of Expertise section can either stand on its own or be combined with a Profile/Summary of Qualifications section as in the example below:

ATTORNEY RESUME

Areas of Expertise

Toxic Torts/Mass Torts
Environmental Law
Construction Law
Corporate Litigation
Class Action
Product Liability

PROFILE

Duke Law School-educated litigator with outstanding track record and considerable expertise in a variety of legal areas including:

- Title VII, ADA , ADEA, and FLSA
- Article 76 and New York Human Rights Law § 296
- Prevailing Wage
- Workers' Compensation
- Unemployment Insurance
- Regulatory Compliance

D. Professional Accomplishments

Accomplishments play a major role in a resume. That's because employers want proven achievers, and the only way to bill yourself as a proven achiever is to show what it is that you have achieved. Accomplishments can often be included within individual job descriptions, but if you have a few very notable accomplishments, why not draw more attention to them by placing them in their own section? Here are examples of how that might be done:

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Managed human resources, insurance, and risk management departments with outstanding efficiency, cutting costs by up to 25%.
- Advised on major, multi-year supply and inventory management agreements; convinced sales management not to execute one such agreement because fraught with litigation risk and customer not in good financial condition (customer later declared bankruptcy).
- Utilized Chapter 11 to employers' best advantage, consistently accomplishing reorganizations in record time.
- Negotiated complex technology and service agreements that saved company over \$40 million.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Brought in \$1.5 million in new business through marketing efforts.
- Received numerous individual performance awards, commendations, and bonuses.
- Devised and executed litigation strategies that consistently produced optimal results for clients.
- Invited to present seminars on effective litigation strategies for the ABA and for the Indiana University School of Law.
- Successfully argued case to Indiana Supreme Court establishing a new tort in Indiana for violations of state constitutional rights.

By creating a powerful top portion of your resume, you can generate interest in your resume and persuade an employer to either reach for the phone immediately to call you or to read your resume all the way through. Either way, you will land an interview-an important first step to obtaining the job you want.