

Resume Tailoring

By Melanie G. Lammers

In my line of work, “resume tailoring” refers specifically to clients who would like extended periods of time to work on their resumes and cover letters with me so that we can adjust their documents as their position descriptions and employment desires shift. However, the broader definition of “tailoring” with regard to resumes, I think, now reflects more than ever its original vocational meaning.

I don't know if these places still exist, but five or 10 years ago, there was a rumor floating around that you could go to certain Levi's Jeans stores across the country and buy a pair of jeans specifically made to fit you. There were articles in magazines and television news spots advertising this *incredible* opportunity for shoppers to get *exactly* what they'd always wanted: perfect-fitting pairs of jeans.

The concept of “the custom fit” was not new to the clothing industry. Tailors had been around for centuries, tucking in fabric here, letting out the hem there, and holding fittings to ensure a good fit, but for some reason, the experience was different this time around. Customers could get involved in the process, and it sounded like fun.

All of a sudden, rather than have someone do all of the tailoring work for you, it was cooler to go to the store yourself and wear the jeans while they were heated in vats of hot water and shrink-dried to custom-fit your body. Those buying the clothes were happy to be part of the fad, and those making the clothes were happy to provide the same jeans for more money to more satisfied customers.

Now, legal professionals, you have the unique opportunity to do the same thing to your resume-free of charge. Yes, your experience remains the same no matter what position you apply for, but you can tweak information and include or exclude facts as necessary to portray yourself in the most positive light for each individual position.

If a firm is looking for proficiency in a specific area, move your applicable experience to the top of the position-responsibilities list on your resume so that your qualifying skills are the first ones employers see. Next, list any transferable skills or experience that can be applied to the new position or required skill set. Even if you do not have any direct experience in the area, you will heighten your chances of getting an interview if you prioritize your employment background in terms of how it directly applies to each potential position.

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Along those same lines, whatever isn't easily explained in a resume shouldn't be explained in your resume. If some of your experience needs a little additional tailoring to make it apply to the firm's desires, address it in the cover letter. Just be sure that all the experiences you allude to are already listed in less conclusive terms on your resume for the sake of consistency.