

How to Present Gaps in Employment and Only One Former Employer on Your Resume

By Emily Sanderson



There are many ways to present information strategically on a resume, even if you have gaps in your employment or only have one previous employer. *Attorney Resume*,

who helps legal professionals and executives write winning resumes, recommends the functionally formatted resume be used in these cases. The functional resume separates your work history and your experience into two sections. The dates of your employment can be listed chronologically, but less prominently in a section below a list of bullets describing your experience. This approach would be favorable if you have gaps in your employment history. An added benefit of the functional resume departs from the traditional bullets, which are included below each company where an individual has been previously employed. In a functional resume, the bullets can be arranged with more flexibility, according to the emphasis for your present career focus.

I work with a lot of resumes in my line of work. I have worked with attorneys from all over the country, and just about every attorney I have worked with has a unique situation, whether he or she has just graduated from law school and is entering the workforce for the first time or is transitioning from another profession in which he or she gained five to 10 years of experience before returning to college to earn a law degree. I have worked with law students looking for summer associate positions, and I have worked with high-powered New York attorneys with 20-plus years of experience. Some seek employment with a firm, and some want something in-house; some want to keep their options open, while others are only interested in contract work in order to gain experience for their own independent practices.

There are many ways to present information strategically on a resume, even if you have gaps in your employment or have only one former employer.

More often than not, I recommend the functionally formatted resume, which separates your work history and your experience into two sections. The dates of your employment can be listed chronologically, but less prominently, if you have gaps, in a section below a list of bullets describing your experience. Bullets, which are listed below former employers in a chronological, or traditional, resume, are treated with more flexibility in a functional resume and placed in the order in which you would like them emphasized in association with your present career focus.

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If you have worked for the same firm for the past 10 years, use the bullets to talk up your work at the firm. The Wall Street Journal recommends showing progression in your work, showing adaptability to multiple environments, using numbers such as dollar figures for cases you won, and grouping like skills under headings that you want to showcase. All of these can be done using a functional resume.



Use the functional resume when you are changing career paths to emphasize transferable skills that you have gained throughout your career which apply to your new course.

Although I offer resume advice that is unique for the individual, one thing is always the same: be confident and be assertive. Remember that a resume is a marketing tool that is only meant to get you a first interview. You do the rest of the work by being prepared for questions that the interviewer will ask.

Talk up your skills; this is your chance to shine. If you have charisma, show it; if you have fantastic research skills, show them that you have researched their firm, that you could jump right in with tasks you could work on related to their line of work. Most of all, remember that you are seeking to make their job easier by fulfilling their staffing needs to the fullest. Be confident that you have something to offer them which is unique.