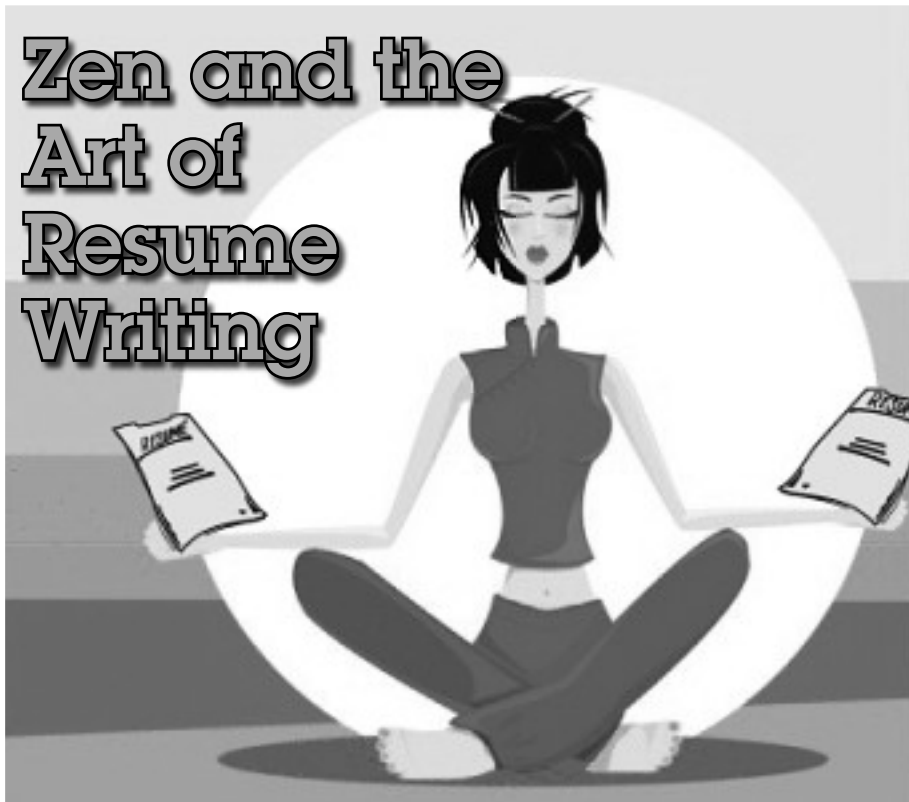


Zen and the Art of Resume Writing



In today's job market, many times less is more — less rhetoric and simple facts get more attention from potential employers.

By Chelle Cordero

Hummm. What does tranquility and transcendence have to do with the frenzied and often discouraging search for employment? Believe it or not, non-reliance on the written word and relaxed self-realization practices may very well get you the job you've been dreaming about.

How, you ask? Human Resources departments and managers often receive a lot of resumes and wind up merely skimming the content. If "something" catches the eye, then the resume is read more thoroughly. Simple, clean layouts and appropriate keywords can help to catch the eye. Relevant content will help to maintain interest.

When it comes to looking for a job, it's more than what you know; it's also what you have done with that knowledge. Think of a tool kit. It may be all shiny and fancy, or it may be worn and simple. What have you built with those tools? If they've been sitting in a drawer and are never used, then the tools' status means nothing.

At one time, it was all the rage to print up a generic draft of your resume, rush it down to the local copy center for bulk printing and send out a mass mailing

to every potential prospect. Today's employment counselors recommend more targeted resumes that are individually prepared for each job application. If you are attending a job fair or someplace where you need to distribute resumes blindly, use help wanted ads from jobs similar to what you are seeking and follow the recommendations below to prepare a limited number of copies.

Take the time to prepare. Research the company where you want to apply, find out the company's priorities and read through the job description. Look at the list of job responsibilities for important key words; turn those keywords and job duties into catch phrases that will grip a prospective employer's attention. When appropriate turn statements such as "analyze data" into "analyzed data." Always use past tense even if you are describing your current position. List your educational background at the end of your resume; highlight courses and projects that are relevant for the position you are applying for.

Never lie or make up "facts." Use actual job experience and accomplishments for your resume, but don't be

shy. Employers are interested in learning what skills you possess, how you've made use of those talents and what your abilities can do for them. If you don't have a vast bank of work experience to draw from, use school experiences, organizations and internships as a basis.

Don't forget entry-level jobs and lessons learned. Even if you were in a volunteer position, if the job description asks for skills that you performed, list that information under work experience. Summarize older experiences.

"Far too many resumes rehash the job description. Using the description as an outline, take each responsibility and document a time when you successfully produced results within the setting outlined. Quantify any increases in earnings, savings, efficiency or customer satisfaction. Present the numbers in numeric form along with the dollar (\$) and percentage (%) signs," recommends Tom Dalzell, author of *Networking for the Novice, Nervous, or Naive Job Seeker*, and professional career advisor and resume writer.

Dezell continued, "With the incredible volume of candidates searching for work, response levels for most jobs posted online run well into the hundreds. Recruiters narrow the pile down by applying lists of key words to the database and continue to add more search terms until reaching a number in which they

feel comfortable reviewing the full résumés. Job seekers must study announcements thoroughly, particularly the job requirements, and make sure the most important industry terms, certifications and technology mentioned appear somewhere in their resume."

Remember that your resume should be an attractive "enlightenment" that will make the company resource manager want to interview you. Correct spelling and grammar is obviously important. Use spell check and read each line carefully; it's a good idea to have someone else review the resume for errors as well. Use bulleted statements rather than complete sentences or paragraphs to list your experience and duties. Bullet statements are much more easily scanned to find key information.

Your resume may only be scanned briefly so you want to make the best impression you can. Forget listing an objective such as "to effectively manage an office." Instead, list your work experience with clear, brief and targeted bullets, and include your education, listing degrees, licenses and certifications at the end. Tailor your resume for each job application and keep it simple and uncluttered.

Never lose sight of what you want to attain. An ancient Chinese Chán master once wrote, "A day without work is a day without food."•

