

Lawyer needs a good summary to grab reader's attention

By [Lisa Chenofsky Singer](#)

As appeared in The Star Ledger Guest Column on July 14th, 2009 (www.nj.com)

TODAY'S APPLICANT

ERNEST BLAIR of Kendall Park is an experienced certified civil trial attorney with a solo law practice. The current economic situation has greatly affected his ability to stay in business, he said, so he is looking to merge his practice into a small- to mid-sized law firm compatible with his experience and background in either the private or government sector.

What I do outside work: I enjoy attending my children's athletic events, from travel softball to AAU basketball, and just watching sports events -- ranging from high school to professional sports -- in general.

[View this applicant's full resume](#)

Person I most admire: My deceased father. Although he only had a high school education, he had a degree in common sense. There seemed to be nothing he could not make, do or fix with his hands.

If I didn't have to work...: I would be hanging out at the beach and engaged in charitable events.

Why you should hire me, in 25 words or less: Over the course of 25 years of practicing law, I have developed a depth and breadth of legal experience that would serve any law firm well.

TODAY'S EXPERT

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THE MARKET

Connecting with your network is one of the most valuable tools in your job search strategy. Identifying firms and/or organizations that fit with your values is another important consideration. In these changing times it is important you remain up to date in your functional area. Remain open to learning new techniques, new systems and new processes. With this knowledge, you can understand what is expected of you, and can leverage your skills following the trends in the market.

In order to be successful, Ernest must truly understand his strengths. Asking friends, family and former colleagues what they believe are your greatest strengths can give you a new perspective. If you agree, great! If you disagree, take some time to clarify the differences and determine what you may need to close the gap and what you want to sell to your next employer or client.

THE RESUME

Ernest needs a summary section to create a brand for himself, highlighting specific areas of law practiced, his strengths and his key successes. Since Ernest has held a number of positions, he needs to summarize his most marketable achievements (based on today's demands) that he can sell to any firm or organization in his target audience. This summary section needs to be clear and concise to capture the resume screener's and the hiring manager's attention.

ADVICE

Ernest's professional experience should begin with his title, firm or organization, rather than dates leading in the left column. Ernest needs to focus on what he wants emphasize to the hiring manager.

For example, he can bold either his firms and organizations, or his title progression, but not both. Dates are not bold. Consider widening the margins to fit the resume on two pages.

By writing a clear and concise summary section, the statements in his "Legal Experience" can be renamed "Professional Experience." This section can be shortened to emphasize specific key achievements for each position he has held - only two to four bulleted points per position.

A resume is a "living document" in a constant state of revision. It must be strategic and forward selling. While there are many ways to create a resume, the written resume is only one version of your presentation to a potential employer. Another is your online presence that is searchable.

- Contact information on a resume is not bold, only your name is. The term "e-mail address" is not needed as it is obvious. A dash or a period after the area code replaces the parenthesis
- Always check for spelling errors beyond spell check. Asking a friend to read your resume is helpful as he/she may pick up the correctly spelled word that is incorrectly used (for example, there and their).
- When a resume is two pages long, ensure page two has your name, phone number and e-mail address because pages do occasionally get separated.
- Have another friend, who is not in your line of work or industry, proofread your resume so that he/she can question the appropriate use of any trade jargon you may have used. This is especially important for the resume screener that may not be familiar with your functional area - your experience may not be understandable to them.
- Another critical success factor is to remain current in your functional area. Continuing educational opportunities are offered by libraries, vendors, alumni and professional associations, just to name a few. These educational courses can be added to the "Professional Development" section of your resume and will show your commitment as a continuous learner within your area of expertise. Consider volunteering on a part-time basis while in your job search. It allows you to develop new relationships and to learn and update new skills, which can also enhance your resume.

Lisa Chenofsky Singer, of Chenofsky Singer & Associates, offers executive and career management coaching and human resources consulting. Lisa writes and speaks on job search and career-related topics. Her website is ChenofskySinger.com