

## How to use your work history to land a job

A non-traditional resume might be just the ticket for a new career

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You can make as little or as much out of your career as you like when crafting your resume.

Go ahead: Exclude moments in your work history you'd rather not have anyone know about. Or pump up moments in your history you're most proud of. There are no rules when it comes to how to describe your experience or how much ink you give or don't give one job or another.

This is especially important when you feel you have only a little history.

Often people write me worried that the lack of a long list of jobs will make them look like hacks on a resume. Maybe you stayed at one company for decades, maybe you ran your own business, maybe you took 10 years off to raise children. These don't necessarily spell doom for job seekers.

You have to figure out how to play up your experience and dissect all the things you did, all the responsibilities you held, all the skills you picked up during your not so diverse career and present them in a clear and concise way on your resume.

And there's nothing wrong with getting a little help from professional resume writers when you're ready to make a career move.

Here are some of your questions:

**I have owned my own business for 30 years. It was very successful until I took a partner, with an agreement for him to purchase it after a time. The fact is, he ruined it. After this length of time, my resume, as far as jobs, is quite short. I have done this for 30 years, and before that, I was a police officer back in the early '70s. I have loads of experience and feel I would be a great asset to someone, but how is the best way to present this? J.J., Enid, Okla.**

Unless you ran a paper route on a Schwinn bicycle with a banana seat for 30 years, I suspect you picked up quite a bit of experience running your own business. The entrepreneurs I know work harder than almost anyone else and end up jacks-of-all-trades handling the administrative, financial, development and marketing aspects of their product or service.

Come on, people! Let's stop belittling the accomplishments we've made just because they didn't work out exactly the way we thought.

You mention being a police officer as an aside. Are you kidding me? Cops also have one of the toughest jobs around, and I'm sure there are tons of companies that wouldn't mind having a person with a background in crime-fighting. Internet fraud is one of the biggest issues right now for businesses of all sorts.

On your resume start out with a four- to five-sentence overview or summary of what you've done during your varied career, suggests Michelle Tillis Lederman, adjunct professor of communications at New York University's Stern Business School.

Maybe something like, "Thirty years of experience running an X company with Y revenues and Z employees. (Fill in the blanks.) As an effective communicator, I was able to build relationships and grow the business from X customers to Y customers."

And add a line about your crime-fighting background. For example, "I spent X number of years with the police force and my specialty was Y."

Under the experience section, says Lederman, you can include three or four functions you handled at the company and add one to three bullets for each, narrating what you accomplished not just your responsibilities.

Similarly, if you worked at for the same company for 20 years, make sure to include different sections including all the positions you held, again with short narratives on your accomplishments, Lederman adds.

And, she continues, always add a section called "additional" where you can include associations you were part of or any volunteer work you did. This is a good place to include hobbies or interests.

The bottom line is emphasizing things in your resume that are specific to the job for which you are applying. If it's an administrative position, then include lots of information on the administrative functions you handled at your own company or the company you worked for. As I've said before, there is nothing wrong with having a bunch of different resumes tailored to a bunch of different professions or jobs.

One last note: Please, J.J., do not mention the problems you had with your partner on your resume or to a prospective employer!! Just say you decided to part ways. Hiring managers don't cotton to soap operas, at least not until you're on the payroll.

**I am looking for a reputable professional company to assist me with my resume. Any suggestions? J.C. Douglasville, Ga.**

Unfortunately I cannot recommend any companies, but what I can tell you is there are probably lots of local small businesses that can provide you help with your resume. I would ask them to show you samples of the work they've done and also provide you names of references who have used their services and actually landed a job as a result.

I would type in resume and your city in a Web search engine and see what you come up with. There are also many national companies that provide help online, but get references and definitely look at resumes they've done in the past.

And if there's a specific industry or profession you are looking to break into I would seriously think about finding a resume-writing service that specializes in that sector. Someone who knows how to write a resume for a banking job won't know how to find you a job as a gym teacher.

If you went to college, you should contact your old school because it may offer career development services for alumni.

There are also quite a few books on the market that could prove helpful. Just take a walk through your local bookstore and go through whatever they have on resume writing. And you can also check out [CareerBuilder.com](http://www.CareerBuilder.com). Their resume-writing service costs \$169 to \$269, but you can check out "before" and "after" examples for free.

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