Resume and Interviewing Workshop

Part I: Resume Tips

1. Avoid the Classic Mistakes

Use spell check. Use 11+ font. Don't let a resume spill three sentences onto page two. Have two people read it before you submit it. Make sure your phone number and e-mail are correct. Don't use your "sexyemperor22@yahoo.com" e-mail address.

2. Make a Reference Sheet

A resume should be a comprehensive "Table of Contents" about your credentials and experience. It should not be a disorganized autobiography. A reader should be able to scan your resume in two minutes and find all the important highlights. Depending on your tastes, goals, and experience, the resume may include these headers:

Goal	Describe the desired position of your job search. If your resume is for a specific company, be sure to tailor your goal to the company and opening.
Summary	Succinctly summarize your skill set and experience in one or two sentences.
Education	Briefly state your college and major. List minors if they are relevant to the job. List your GPA if it is greater than 3.5 or required by the company. State your graduation date. If you haven't yet graduated, list your "Expected Graduation Date."
Relevant Experience	Describe your work experience using clear headers to indicate the company, position, and dates of employment.
Course Projects	If you have little work experience, describe relevant course projects using clear headers to indicate the project name, course name and date.
Technical Skills	Many employers scan in resumes and do automatic searches of key words. Use this section to quickly list all known technologies, programming languages, software packages, and other relevant skills.
Awards & Activities	Briefly list relevant awards. Mention activities if you are comfortable; these often present good ice-breaker conversation topics.

3. Avoid Empty Words

Those who conduct technical interviews are often technical themselves. They are scientists and engineers who are not impressed by a thesaurus. They want data, proof, and examples. Don't use these kinds of empty phrases on your resume:

- I work effectively on a team.
- I am a motivated person with strong communication skills.

Bad: Empty and useless!

Instead, think about how you can s*how* instead of *tell*. To indicate you work effectively on a team, describe your experience with a team project. To indicate your communication skills, describe what documents you have written. To show you are motivated, indicate what projects have been completed early or on-time; describe what technologies you've learned on your own to get the job done.

4. Provide a Concrete Summary

For students and new graduates, keep the resume to one page. However, the recruiter won't even read one page unless given good reason. Empty statements of purpose are useless:

- To obtain a challenging summer internship.
- Starting position at a solid software company.

Bad: Empty and useless!

Instead, offer a concrete summary or goal at the top to give people a reason to keep reading:

Goal: Having completed my sophomore year in my four-year Electrical Engineering degree, I am looking to obtain my first summer internship so that I may gain experience in my field.

Good: Concrete details help potential employers learn about you and your experience.

Summary: Senior electrical engineering major specializing in embedded systems and digital design. Training in software design and computer programming. Advanced study in mathematics and English contribute to strong analysis and communication skills.

5. Boost Relevant Experience

It is challenging for students and new graduates to compose a resume without job experience. But, it is hard to get a job *without* experience. People often list their course work as a substitute for experience, but that offers little real information. Instead, phrase your favorite course projects as relevant experience.

Common Emitter Amplifier Project | Electronic Circuits:
Conducted the detailed design, analysis and laboratory build and test of a discreet Common Emitter Amplifier. Used advanced CAD analysis with PSPICE and MATLAB to develop a BJT voltage amplifier; tested the final circuit using a Tektronix 2213 analog oscilloscope to demonstrate it was built to specification. My final circuit was accompanied by a 10-page report communicating the design, simulations, and results.

Good: Detail favorite course projects and phrase them as relevant experience.

MSI Counters | Digital Logic Laboratory:
Designed and built three different counters and demonstrated their different performance characteristics. Counters included a binary-coded decimal up/down counter, a binary counter, and a cascaded counter built from the 74LS190 and 74LS163, two TTL 4-bit counter integrated circuits.

6. Demonstrate You Understand the Big Picture

Scientists and engineers often just report the things they've made or the work they've done. They expect that it is interesting on its own terms. Consider the following two job descriptions:

Software Engineering Intern
Harlan Financial Solutions, Inc. Portland, OR   **2008**
• Designed two programs to efficiently process detailed .pdf forms.
• Analyzed existing C/C++ software for upgrade to C#.

Bad: Don't just describe the work. Also describe its impact.

Computer Lab Assistant
University of Portland. Portland, OR   **May 1995-Present**
• Advised students, monitored equipment.

The above descriptions are adequate--the headings are clear, the bullets are concise--but there is room for improvement. Those who connect their project to the company goals, bottom-line, or customer experience demonstrate a deeper understanding. Description of work experience should have a *cause* and *effect*.

Software Engineering Intern
Harlan Financial Solutions, Inc. Portland, OR   **2008**
• Designed two programs to efficiently process detailed .pdf forms; the automated conversion saved Harland Financial employees 25 minutes-per-form of manual data entry.
• Analyzed existing C/C++ software for upgrade to C# to reduce security risks to the company's databases.

Good: The experience is detailed, but so is the work's impact.

It's not enough to say "I did this." Employers want to know you think about your company and its employees. "I did this, and it was good for these reasons."

Computer Lab Assistant
University of Portland. Portland, OR   **May 1995-Present**
• As a computer lab assistant, I was responsible for advising staff, faculty, and students on software and equipment so that users could get their work done quickly and efficiently.

Most people haven't heard of the companies you've worked for; perhaps Harland Financial and Cypress Semiconductor may be notable names in your city, but the world is big. Provide a summary of the company to give your reader the context of your experience.

Summer Intern   **| Harland Financial Solutions, Portland, Oregon.**
Harland Financial Solutions supplies comprehensive software solutions to over 6,500 clients; products and services include enterprise content management and Internet banking.

Good: Describe each company; give the context of your work experience.

EGR 110 Tool Room Assistant | University of Portland, Portland, Oregon.
EGR 110 is a course taken by all engineering freshman at the University of Portland. It culminates in the Freshman Engineering Competition in which over 20 teams design and build a radio-controlled robot to complete a challenge. Parts may only be purchased through the tool room.

Part II: Interviewing Tips

1. Be Interested to Be Interesting

Show up with good questions. Ask open questions of the individuals interviewing you; this often makes for good stories and gives you a break from talking:

- If you had it to do again, would you take this job?
- What's the best thing about working here?
- What's the worst thing about working here?
- How is your work-life balance?

Good: Be interested in others; you can learn about the company get a break from talking.

Be interested of the technical world around you so that you have something interesting to chat about while walking down the hall or eating lunch. For example, read high-profile blogs regularly to stay current:

Recent article on http://daringfireball.net, "Microsoft's Long, Slow Decline"
Recent article on http://dashes.com/anil/, "Apple Secrecy Does Not Scale"

2. Do Your Research

Really, show up with good questions. Spend time on the company's website and formulate intelligent questions about the company's business plan, competitors, or core values. Understand the particular position for which you are interviewing and have answers ready.

3. Be Somebody You'd Want to Work With

You have likely worked in teams before. You've perhaps worked with "the whiner" or "the drama queen" or the "flake who makes big promises." You don't want to work with these people, and neither does the person interviewing you.

The people interviewing you are potential co-workers. Not only are they assessing your technical ability; they also want to see if you would be good to work with. Don't say:

- They picked the wrong database software, so I had a bunch of extra work.
- Nobody knew what they were doing.
- I had to do it all myself.

Bad: This makes you sound like a big jerk.

Instead, be sure to spin past experiences in a positive light:

- The database software used by the company was not ideal for the task, but I enjoyed challenge of interfacing it to our new product.
- None of us had experience with the technology, so we had to ramp up quickly. I loved learning so many new things so quickly.
- Our resources were spread pretty thin, and it was a lot of extra hours, but I'm proud that we got it done on time.

Good: This makes you sound like you make the best of a situation--a good team player!

3. Be the *Sales* Version of Yourself

It's difficult for many of us to brag about ourselves. We often worry about what we don't know and figure that the things we do know are too easy and not interesting. As much as possible, direct the conversation to your favorite projects; your excitement for the topic will engage your interviewer.

Part III: Sample Job Openings

Internship opening taken from microsoft.com on August 12, 2009

Software Development Engineer (SDE)
This internship is where the fun begins for code gurus like you. As a hands-on Software Development Engineer intern, you'll learn how to make decisions about design and feature implementation, using your mastery of technical tools to help make a product vision a reality. If you would like to write code and design efficient data structures and algorithms to develop next-generation applications or operating systems, listen up. This internship shows you how SDEs bring products to life by working with Program Managers to ensure strong design and Software Development Engineers in Test to ensure quality through testing. Ultimately for the SDE, it's your code that turns concepts into new technologies and services.

Qualifications:

- Pursuing a B.S./M.S. or Ph.D. degree in Engineering, Computer Science, or related field
- 1-2 years experience programming in C/C++/C#, Java, and/or other computer programming languages preferred
- Ability to derive creative and innovative solutions by thinking ""outside the box""
- Expertise in feature definition, design, and feasibility
- Demonstrated skill in estimating development time

When interviewing for a specific job, it's very important to tailor your resume to the job opening description. Think of the description as an exam and your resume is the answer booklet for all the exam questions. It should be clear to the person reading your resume that you have the right experience for the job.

What particular details would you add to your resume to make it specific to this job opening?

How might you address situations where you might not have the exact experience necessary?