

# STRATEGIC RESUMES

Writing for Results

Marci Mahoney

## ***A Crisp Fifty-Minute™ Series Book***

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### CREDITS

Product Manager: **Debbie Woodbury**

Production Editor: **Genevieve McDermott**

Editor: **Bev Manber**

Production Artists: **Nicole Phillips, Rich Lehl, and Betty Hopkins**

Typesetting: **ExecuStaff**

Manufacturing: **Julia Coffey**

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# LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR:

## *STRATEGIC RESUMES*

The objectives for *Strategic Resumes* are listed below. They have been developed to guide the user to the core issues covered in this book.

### **THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS BOOK ARE TO HELP THE USER:**

- 1) To review the essential purpose of a resume
- 2) To explain resume writing techniques
- 3) To present a variety of sample resumes

### **ASSESSING PROGRESS**

A Crisp Series **assessment** is available for this book. The 25-item, multiple-choice and true/false questionnaire allows the reader to evaluate his or her comprehension of the subject matter.

To download the assessment and answer key, go to [www.courseilt.com](http://www.courseilt.com) and search on the book title.

*Assessments should not be used in any employee selection process.*

## PREFACE

I first became aware of the potential for a resume to be a very special statement 15 years ago. As a Bernard Haldane Associates client, I encountered an approach to resume development that incorporated an objective, summary listing of major skills and series of accomplishments along with the usual sections on education and work.

Using those structural components, my consultant Richard Bell and I came up with a finished product that was a tremendous thrill to me at the time, and the start of a personal fascination with helping other people come up with similarly strong resumes.

I had no written guidelines nor base of samples for reference. The design process initially began on a conceptual level. The core idea seemed to involve building a bridge between past experience and new horizons, of finding links and writing them up persuasively. The resume became a sales tool for developing new work options.

Very gradually, I defined a systematic and detailed methodology for accomplishing that purpose. And while consulting on and editing resumes on the career services staff of a university, came up with the distinguishing feature of this approach—STRATEGIC resumes. The name was a breakthrough perception on what made them distinctive.

Strategy means knowing what you want, and marshalling resources to achieve your goal. It involves stepping outside the regular parameters of thinking about careers, jobs and qualifications. It's an intellectually demanding task that requires practicality and creativity in bringing out your strengths, in building a case for your candidacy.

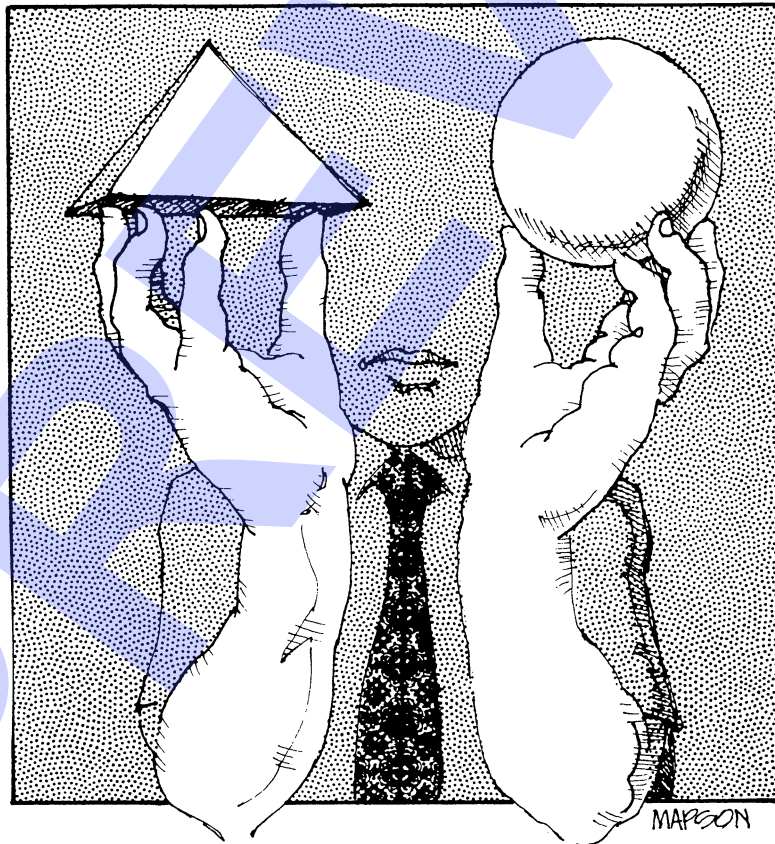
Special thanks are in order to the many people who have given permission to use their resumes as samples. (To protect privacy, they are all fictionalized). Especially appreciated in this regard are students and alumni of Golden Gate University in San Francisco, and the clients of our firm in Scituate, Massachusetts . . .

And in the production phase, a very grateful acknowledgment to Kent Wampler for his consistent help in refining ideas, streamlining language, and formatting samples. Warm thanks also to Phil Gerould, Publisher at Crisp Publications, Inc., whose sensitivity and facilitative style have been uncommon grace notes in the challenging, slow task of moving this manuscript into print!

P A R T

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## Change — The New Constant



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PREVIEW

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# NEW CHALLENGES IN THE WORK WORLD

We live in a time of dramatic change. It happens fast and continuously alters the shape of the world on every level and in every part of our lives. In particular, today's work world is a challenging arena. From the multinational corporation to the small business sector, change is the new and only constant. Large shifts in the composition of the labor force have occurred. Increased competitive pressures have brought about profound changes in organizations. Traditional definitions of careers no longer apply as new approaches to work design and compensation gain widespread use.

## The Challenge of Pathfinding

Conditions in the work world are often hard and uncertain. Very little remains of the old order, of stable organizations and secure careers. The marketplace seems to exist in a state of permanent flux. Routes to opportunity that used to be available have disappeared.

Securing work has become more difficult. Prospects for advancement have diminished. Job security has become elusive. The terms of engagement and formulas for success have become unclear for both organizations and individuals. Loyalty and trust, which traditionally have formed the basis of an implied employment contract, have been replaced by a survival mentality and caution about commitments.

Career paths, in the usual sense, have become casualties of the economic forces. There is no assurance of linear progression through a formal sequence of jobs; organizations are changing, merging and disappearing with disconcerting regularity.

With the landscape of the world of work so changed and continuing to change, our old maps are obsolete. Their information is no longer a reliable indicator for setting a course. Getting from Point A to Point B has become a matter of personal exploration and navigation in uncharted territory.

PATH-FOLLOWING no longer works . . .

The task has shifted to PATHFINDING.

## The Challenge of Perspective

Perspective is another key to personal career management in the new order. Change can be confusing and hard to manage when there is no "big picture" framework to make sense out of what is happening. Recognizing the broad social forces that are reshaping the workplace can help a lot in developing your own personal gameplan for career success.

## TEN TRENDS AFFECTING JOBS

According to *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, a trend is "a prevailing tendency, a general movement, a line of development." How in sync do you feel with the following ten trends? Which do you see as problematic for your job search? Which do you see as beneficial?

### **New Players**

- Baby-boomers, born from the mid-forties to the mid-sixties, have added large numbers of educated workers to the labor force. Initially competing for entry level jobs, they now face increasing competition for decreasing numbers of middle and upper level positions.
- More women have joined the work force, supported by a change in social norms. These women are prepared with high levels of education, motivated by desire for achievement and by economic pressures.
- Immigrants, primarily Hispanic and Asian, have greatly increased the labor force.

### **A More Highly Educated Work Force**

- Over half of all high school graduates continue their education. The number of people in the work force with college degrees has almost doubled in the last 20 years. While emerging jobs require stronger educational credentials, the supply of educated workers is greater than the demand, which frequently leads to underemployment.

### **Technological Innovation**

- Automation and computerization are increasing productivity, while eliminating many unskilled and semiskilled jobs. New professional-level jobs tend to occur in different sectors of the economy and in fewer numbers.
- Improved communications technology is accommodating the use of low-cost technical talent, overseas in decentralized business operations.

### **A Global Economy**

- Decreased demand for goods from labor-intensive industries, continuing trade deficits with foreign nations, and cheaper overseas production costs have led to significant cuts in manufacturing jobs in the United States.

### **Deregulation**

- Governmental withdrawal from the transportation, communication and financial industries has led to price wars and cost-cutting strategies that include layoffs.

## Restructurings and Downsizings

- A “do more with less” attitude and changes in the design of jobs that emphasize a self-managing work force, have eliminated many staff and middle-management positions.
- Mergers and acquisitions have led to redundant departments. Many people have become “surplus,” prime candidates for redeployment and lay-offs.

## Decreasing Strength of Organized Labor

- Unions, as a force in maintaining pay levels and job security, have been weakened. Many unionized jobs have been eliminated because of plant closings and overseas operations, availability of replacement workers, and fewer numbers of unionized workers in growing service sector organizations.

## Increasing Use of Temporary Workers

- Companies have reduced the volume of “good jobs,” characterized by full-time work, benefits, job security and advancement. Many are turning to two-tier employment systems of core, regular employees and leased, contract employees, and increasing their use of external companies to replace internal departments.

## Expanding and Contracting Sectors of Opportunity

- The fast growing and diverse service sector, a small business economy, is the core area for emerging job opportunity. Growth is also happening in the wholesale and retail trade sectors, especially in food stores, bars and restaurants.
- Tax reductions and greater budget pressures have reduced the volume of job opportunity at all levels of government. Manufacturing in “sunset” industries such as steel, auto, tire, textile, apparel and coal is down significantly.

## Changing Roles and Reward Systems in Organizations

- A shift away from a formal, sequential progression of jobs is seen in the growth of project-based work that adds value to the enterprise, with pay for performance.
- Expectations of personal decision making and initiative are strong, as is support for growth in skills and knowledge that enhance employability.

### Recommended Readings on Changes in the Work World

These are all treasures, solidly researched, with in-depth presentation and thorough analysis:

*The Changing Workplace* by Carl McDaniels; *The Right Place at the Right Time* by Robert Wegmann and Robert Chapman; *Work in the New Economy, Rev.* by Robert Wegmann, Robert Chapman and Miriam Johnson; *When Giants Learn to Dance* by Rosabeth Moss Kanter; and *Downsizing* by Robert M. Tomasko.

## CHANGE-READINESS: AN ADAPTIVE SKILL

The new work place is dynamic and volatile. Uncertainty is certain. Change is inevitable and pervasive. Even in cultures where stability and continuity are prized, external forces influence and sometimes determine business decisions.

On a mega-scale, a shift in oil prices can reverberate through organizations that seem far removed from the energy industry, causing retrenchment through job cuts. Within industries—in transportation, for example—a shake-out among providers can eliminate entire companies. In large organizations, restructuring and downsizing may close whole divisions and departments. In small businesses, survival often depends on trimming jobs to trim overhead.

Apart from what happens “out there,” you may notice your own values and interests tugging at you to create change, to open up new horizons. Maybe what you are doing no longer supports your growth. Perhaps you are in an environment that no longer meets your needs. So independently, you are initiating change, inviting it, going after it.

### **For Surviving and Thriving**

Change-readiness will be your best friend when you find yourself needing or wanting to make a move. It is a state of mind that is geared to the benefits of new events. It is a resolve to do whatever may be required to achieve a better situation.

When you have change-readiness, you can absorb the pressures of disruptive or displacing outside factors. You can move ahead with your life. When you have change-readiness, you are attuned to your instincts around what you need to do to earn a living and you can create your right livelihood.

Catalysts for change can be external or internal. For the change-ready person, it does not matter. What matters is his or her core disposition to relate to change, to see it as a vehicle for important personal and career development.

## On Developing Change-Readiness

Developing change-readiness may mean doing some emotional homework. It may mean recognizing the pull of the familiar, of the status quo, and getting in touch with your motivation for a more meaningful alternative. It may mean developing a shield against wavering thoughts about your personal potential and outside influences that discourage your move.

You may want to look at your support systems, the people in your life who believe in you and want you to succeed. These are the people who will listen to you, talk with you frankly, cheer you on, and in various other ways be invaluable resources.

Finally, you may want to take a look at what you can do to build in flexibility for taking quick and effective action in new career initiatives. How clear are you about realistic and attractive options? How prepared are you to discuss opportunities with new employers?



## A CHANGE-READINESS QUIZ

Place a check on the scale below for each of the following statements, at the point that best describes how you relate to change:

1. I find change to be basically:  
**Disruptive** \_\_\_\_\_ **Stimulating**
2. I see change as:  
**Crisis** \_\_\_\_\_ **Opportunity**
3. I make changes:  
**When necessary** \_\_\_\_\_ **When possible**
4. I handle change:  
**With difficulty** \_\_\_\_\_ **With ease**

Circle the response that describes your current career situation:

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| 5. I have a "Plan A" for my next career move.                                     | <b>Yes</b> <b>No</b> |
| 6. I have a "Plan B" for my next career move.                                     | <b>Yes</b> <b>No</b> |
| 7. I have at least three months of income saved as a buffer against unemployment. | <b>Yes</b> <b>No</b> |
| 8. I have some realistic ideas about interim jobs I could do, if I need to.       | <b>Yes</b> <b>No</b> |

Complete the following unfinished sentences:

- A change I want to make in my employment situation is:

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- Factors I have going for me in making this change include:

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- Additional things I can do to enhance my change-readiness are:

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# MANAGING CHANGE BY MANAGING YOUR CAREER

In the midst of changing workplace conditions, there is a resource for path-finding—a very powerful and reliable resource. It is a way for you to find direction when there are no external signs and signals telling you where to go and when to stop and go. It is the bridge to opportunity when the old roads are no longer serviceable.

## *Career Management:*

### **A Concept, a Set of Skills and a Personal Commitment**

#### ► **The Career Management Concept**

The core concept in career management is that you have the freedom and the responsibility to manage your own career. No one else can do it for you. No one else will do it for you. And no one else will care as much about your career.

When managing your career becomes a self-directed process, you gain a great deal of control over your working life. You take ownership of realizing your personal potential. You become a stakeholder in developing ways to earn a living, no matter what options close down for you along the way.

When you claim the career management concept as your own personal outlook, you gain a stabilizing perspective for handling the toughest of transitions. *And* you become energized to create work that you really want to do, work that you will value and enjoy, work that will be a source of meaning and vitality, contribution and growth.

#### ► **Career Management Skills**

Career management is based on several very important skills—abilities for you to develop, use and refine at every stage of your working life.

Career management means identifying what you have to offer and what you want to do. It means defining goals that are consistent with your greatest strengths and interests, connected to needs in the marketplace. It means scouting out opportunity that is often in obscure and unexpected places, and communicating effectively with people who can help leverage you for a position or hire you.

## CAREER MANAGEMENT (continued)

Once selected for a new job or a new assignment, career management means delivering peak performance, staying attuned constantly to adding value, practicing learning as a way of life, and building and maintaining strong relationships with your co-workers, colleagues and customers.

### ► Career Management Commitment

Your commitment to managing your career will be the single most important factor in your success. It will get you going and keep you going when times are hard. It will help you to take horizon-broadening risks. It will drive every initiative you make, and motivate employers to invest in themselves by investing in you.