

how to build a strong IT resume



Insider tips and suggestions on
how to build an IT resume that
will set you apart from the crowd

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Building a resume for the Information Technology sector is very different than writing a generic model. Advice on how to set your resume apart from the crowd can vary between professions. Sapphire's top Recruiting Managers offer valid tips and guidance to IT professionals looking to draft a successful resume. We explain how some of the most common tips one receives for basic resume writing don't quite apply in the IT sector.

Details, details, details!

Basic resume tip

Your resume should not exceed two pages. Know when to stop!

IT resume tip

The length of your resume will vary depending on your experience. If the end result is five pages, so be it!

IT professionals tend to need longer resumes because their roles are so complex. It's difficult for candidates to encapsulate everything they've done into just a few bullet points per position. Condensing capabilities into four or five bullets, as a standard resume format dictates, just doesn't do a justice to IT professionals' past experience and knowledge. If you have five or more years in IT, especially so for a technical candidate, it is perfectly okay to have a three, four, or even five page resume.

Clients look for details so they don't have to make assumptions about what people did. They want to be crystal clear on what someone is capable of doing and what he has done in the past.

IT hiring managers aren't interested in short summary documents. Clients want to be able to make informed decisions about which candidates are worth interviewing based on a resume that communicates the technologies with which an IT professional has worked. Include the depth of experience you have within each technology, the size and scope of projects on which you've worked, how you've achieved various accomplishments, and more.

Clients look for details so they don't have to make assumptions about what people did. They want to see in black and white that certain skill sets are definitely held by someone. They want to be crystal clear on what someone is capable of doing and what he has done in the past. The greater details you provide the fewer questions the client walks away with.

Though the end result of your resume may end up being five pages, know when to stop by only providing relevant details, skill sets, and past positions. You don't want to bury key information amongst a sea of outdated facts.

Can you repeat that?

Basic resume tip

Add a variety of descriptive terms to avoid seeming boring, uneducated, or lazy.

IT resume tip

The more repetition, the better. Repeating terms helps communicate a job seeker's depth of experience with a particular technology or subject.

Contrary to generic resumes, repetition in an IT resume is perfectly acceptable - and encouraged. Hiring managers look for patterns on a job seeker's resume. Repetition helps to communicate a job seeker's depth of experience with a particular technology or subject, which is something our clients want to see on IT professionals' resumes.

Resume repetition helps illustrate your strong suits and areas of expertise. It's okay to repeat something you've done in several roles multiple times. If hiring managers are looking for something specific, they will want to see how many times a particular term comes up on your resume. An example would be if a hiring manager was hoping to find someone with budgeting experience they would search the term 'budgeting' to see how often it comes up on your resume. If you only have 'budgeting' listed once or twice in your resume, you risk going into the 'no pile' because it looks like your experience here isn't extensive enough. If you have ample experience within a skill set be sure to place those key terms wherever applicable, as often as that may be.

It's okay to repeat something you've done in several roles multiple times. If hiring managers are looking for something specific, they will want to see how many times a particular term comes up on your resume.

The strategy here is to know which terms to repeat. Understanding the position you're applying for will greatly assist in which skill sets and terms you want to highlight. It's all about relevance.

Know when to adjust your title.

Basic resume tip

Keep your title exactly as it appeared in your previous role(s). By changing your title you are tampering with the way people perceive your past experience.

IT resume tip

If necessary, adjust your previous job titles so they read easier and/or convey your role in a clearer manner.

... adjust your title so it is in line with the position you are aiming for.

Often times, IT job seekers have to tweak their titles in order to more clearly communicate in a given role. Some banking institutions give employees VP titles even though their role is more of a project or program manager. If you have a VP title on your resume and you are applying for a project management position, the hiring manager may automatically put you in the 'no pile,' thinking you're too senior for the position. In this scenario, you would adjust your title so it is in line with the position you are aiming for.

The trick to modifying a title is to maintain its accuracy. You'll want to make sure any title you adjust can still be confirmed during a reference check. Don't stray too far apart from your original title.

Avoid the glitz, glam, and clutter. Keep it simple.

Basic resume tip

Add images, graphics, tables, or charts to help convey your story.

IT resume tip

Keep your resume informative and easy to navigate. You want to illustrate your skills and knowledge, not your brilliant use of clip art.

Because IT resumes tend to be much more detail oriented than generic resumes you'll want to be able to properly show your skills and previous projects you've worked on. Avoid cluttering your resume with countless graphics and charts. Let your experience speak for itself. We recommend avoiding flash and notes as we tend to remove all fancy formatting from candidates' resumes. Managers just want your resume to be an easy read.

Avoid cluttering your resume with countless graphics and charts. Let your experience speak for itself.

The key is knowing how to call attention to key information subtly without the use of additional graphics, charts, and illustrations. Hiring managers should be able to pull information quickly and efficiently without any distractions.

Let's recap!

A summary of the crucial differences between generic resume building and IT professionals' needs are noted below.

Do provide details

It's important to include all relevant skill sets, projects, and accomplishments – all of which aid in building up great detail.

Do repeat key terms

Repetition within an IT resume is recommended. We learned clients have a superior interest in searching and locating particular words that tie into the position at hand.

Do adjust your title

When applicable, you may adjust your previous job titles to better explain that role. It's important to make subtle changes as opposed to drastic ones as you'll need confirmation during a reference check.

Do avoid unnecessary graphics

Help create a streamlined and easy-to-navigate resume by ditching graphs, charts, and flashy icons. It's best to stick to what's important - the content.



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