How to Make a Resume Stand Out: Crash Course Business - Soft Skills #5

Crash Course: Business - Soft Skills
https://youtube.com/watch?v=T_4JBbeGsSE
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/T_4JBbeGsSE

When I was waiting for *Black Panther* to come out, everything had me hyped. The trailer with a killer soundtrack and Michael B. Jordan, who I did not know I needed in my life, the posters with the whole cast serving (?~0:16) looks, and the glowing reviews that all ended with a resounding "Wakanda Forever."

Now, we can't make the job search as fun as the release of *Black Panther*. But, we can help you make some eye-catching promotional materials for yourself, like a resume and cover letter that will get employers hyped to hire you. I'm Evelyn from the Internets, and this is Crash Course Business: Soft Skills.

[Intro]

Let's say you've been scrolling through job boards for days on end. You've found a bunch of decent options, and then, there it is: the perfect gig. Wouldn't it be nice if you could just call and get hired on the spot? Unfortunately, the job search doesn't work like that. Remember trust? The hiring process is a way to make sure that you're a good fit for a company, and have the competence, intent, and integrity to do the job well.

The best way to start gaining trust and land yourself an interview is with a resume that demonstrates your work history and potential. Sure, like Amy Santiago, you could build a binder with cascading tabs of all your skills. And, if the job posting asks for a C.V., you have a bit of extra space. C.V.s should be about two pages— unless you're in academia, in which case, go wild. They should list your publications, speaking engagements, and additional side work. But, **a well-tailored resume shouldn't be more than a page long. Don't try to squeeze your entire job history— just the qualifications that make you a great fit.**

If your life is a movie, the resume is a trailer. And, even though formatting can vary, there's a basic structure to a resume, and you should pick whatever pieces tell the most cohesive and enticing story. For structure, many people break up their resume into experience and education. **If you've just graduated or don't have much work experience list education first. Otherwise, lead with experience.** Grades and standardized test scored show you were good at school, but a resume should show you're good at learning. List each experience under its own header with the time you worked there, and summarize your work in clear, concise bullet points.

A good movie trailer gets people hooked. And, whether you like the movie or not, *The Girl with a Dragon Tattoo* trailer gave me chills. So, your resume should always paint the most flattering picture of who you are. If your grades weren't what you would've liked, you could leave your GPA unlisted. Or, if you're been out of school a while, start with your most recent work experience, like your latest hosting gig on Crash Course. Then, list other relevant positions.

You'll want to describe your previous responsibilities and achievements concisely, and use keywords related to the job posting. Recruiters are busy people. Sometimes, they only have time to quickly scan each resume, or they use software that filters through resumes based on those keywords.

Showcase the important things you accomplished, not just your basic job description. Good movie trailers include genre-specific exciting moments, from a meet-cute to a flashy action sequence — so tailor your resume to the job and make it memorable! If possibly, you can also quantify the impact you had. And, to save space, try to keep each bullet point under two lines.

So, if the job you're applying for wants an "independent worker" who's a "creative problem solver," you could say you "independently wrote, directed, and hosted over 500 YouTube videos that involved creative storytelling and generated over 180,000 subscribers." (That's me, ya'll).

You can showcase non-work-related things that set you apart in optional sections, like volunteer work, activities, or interests. But, make sure everything is relevant to what you're applying for. Playing a didgeridoo might be impressive, but it won't make you seem like a good lawyer.

Under **qualifications** or **skills**, you can list specifics that set you apart, like financial literacy, software, or languages. **Avoid broad terms like "communication" because they won't help you stand out.** Or meaningless buzzwords, like synergy (no one knows what synergy is. Every business person says it, but what is it?).
And, **only include an objective statement, which states your goals for employment, if the job posting asks for it.** My objective statement might be: content creator with 10 years experience looking to make engaging new media for diverse audiences. But, I probably don't need to list it, because it takes up precious real estate. And, honestly, employers know wel all have the same objective: be employed.

Now, if a resume is your movie trailer, the cover letter is your poster. If you're looking for a rom-com, you'll know to avoid *The Expendables* because of the poster with a skill, guns, biceps, triceps... there's, there's a trapezoid? Just way too much testosterone. **A cover letter is a long-form descriptive letter.** But, like a good movie poster, it'll quickly show you've done your research to appeal to a specific organization. The content and format of cover letters can vary depending on the industry, as well as your own writing style. We've listed a couple of resources in the description.

In general, you should go into some detail about experiences that would make you an especially good fit for the job, and tie it all back to why you value this company. But, stay **concise**. It's a letter, not a book! So, if you're applying to help organize a Women in Media conference, you could talk about your passion for storytelling and your dedication to promoting equality, intersectionality, and, of course, sprinkling in a little Black Girl Magic.

Now that you have your trailer and poster, you need some critical endorsement. This is where **references** come in. You should always have at least three references lined up that you have asked to help you out, and who will give you a glowing review. You want that 100% fresh rating on your personal tomato-meter. They should be professors or previous co-workers, not your friends and family.

And, once you've got your endorsements, you need to set up a few preview screenings. That's **networking**. One of the most effective ways to find a job is to be personally referred to someone. The idea of, "It's not what you know, it's who you know" can be scarily accurate. But luckily, anyone can build a professional network with time and effort. **Stay in touch with former managers, teachers, co-workers, and professors! And remember to build a strong reputation, both inside and outside of work**.

Now, just like we judge celebrities by what they've said online, (I'm looking at you, Kanye— what's going on?!), make sure your movie isn't tarnished by social media garbage fires. And, just like you'd Google a best friend's Tinder date, a potential employer is going to be checking up on you. So, even if you're not in the middle of a job search, make sure to check your profiles pretty often for red flags.

But, that can be tricky, so let's go to the Thought Bubble.

Let's say you went on a fantastic vacation to Roswell, New Mexico. You hiked a bit, went on a planetary pub crawl, and maybe you thought you saw a UFO in the field by your Airbnb. You really want to post some trip highlights, but you're searching for a job. So, what

should you share?

Obviously, **discriminatory comments about race, gender, age, or other groups are never okay, on social media or in life** (come on, people). But, beyond that, there are no hard and fast rules about what is or isn't appropriate— it all depends on the recruiter. Probably keep any **curse words** in check. And, it's better to avoid **references to alcohol or drug use**— so, photos of that beer-chugging contest are out.

Like any written communication, even a tweet with poor spelling or grammar could knock your reputation down a few points. And, some positions scrutinize more than others, so mistakes could haunt you like a "No Ragrets" tattoo. It's also important to be wary of context. Someone scouting for a top-secret paranormal project may like your insta-worthy photo of a possible UFO; a recruiter for a scientific journal may not. Plus, the people reading your posts likely don't know you. You can't always predict how your inside jokes will look to someone who stumbles across your feed. So, double-check what seems appropriate with a trusted friend. And, remember that **just because you've set your profile to private doesn't mean that it's 100% safe. Like, you could be tagged publicly in a friends' photo** or something. So, the safest bet is probably posting a picture of you hiking in a cute alien t-shirt and calling it a day.

Thanks, Thought Bubble!

So, networking can happen online, like with portfolio submissions or chatting on social media. Or, it can happen offline, where people aren't constantly judging your tweets. **Career fairs** are good tools to meet representatives from lots of companies at once, and talk about careers face-to-face. They're most common at high schools or colleges, but there are career fairs for people who are out of school, too!

You can also request an **informational interview** to talk with someone about a position you may want to have. It doesn't need to be formal. It can be as simple as asking to grab coffee. And, it's super important to avoid making it sound like you're fishing for a job. It's in the name: this interview is for information. So, ask questions about their company, their role, what makes them feel fulfilled, and what concerns you may have about the field. It's a great opportunity to get ideas for your resume, or help you figure out if it's even a job you want. There's always a chance that internship with your professor won't be quite what you bargained for.

And, I know that networking, writing cover letters, fine-tuning your resume, and scanning job boards can get a bit overwhelming. That's why it's important to stay organized. Bullet journal or something! Keep records of the people you've contacted for informational interviews and who they've referred you to. **Make a spreadsheet with details about where you've applied, and save the job descriptions**. Sometimes, job postings get taken down when candidates are contacted. And, if you don't hear back right away, don't get discouraged. It's really tough out there and can take over 50 applications to hear back from one place. Take the job search one day at a time, and set goals. Your persistence will pay off. Once you've built a great promo package for yourself, you'll be sure to find an audience that wants to see your movie! I mean... hire you. I've taken the metaphor too far.

So, if you remember nothing else from this episode, make sure to: Number one, make a trailer. Resumes should highlight key experiences that make you a good candidate. Number two, create a poster. Use a cover letter as a snapshot of why you're a good fit for a company. Number three, find your flattering critic. Build contacts that can speak to your professionalism and your work habits. And, number four, showcase your work. Attend career fairs and set up informational interviews.

Next time, we'll talk about what happens after you get your foot through the proverbial door: **the interview**.

[Outro]

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Crash Course is a Complexly production. If you want to keep imagining the world complexly with us, you can check out some of our other channels, like Animal Wonders, where host Jessi Knudsen Castañeda shares behind-the-scenes footage of what it's like to care for 80 plus exotic animals.

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