

## Network to Work Meeting

Resource Materials – January 2016

# Writing an Effective Summary of Qualifications

Imagine you are sitting down with someone to discuss a job. What would you tell them? Would you give them a laundry list of the tasks you did at your various jobs? Why? What do you think such a list says about you?

Now imagine instead answering this question: *“I am a(n) \_\_\_\_\_.”* To respond to this type of question, ideally you would share information about your qualities, skills and accomplishments.

**These are the things that distinguish you from the others applying for a job.**

If your resume doesn't answer the question “I am a(n) . . .”, then you are selling yourself short. That's why we encourage you to include a Summary of Qualifications on your resume. It is here that you will showcase your qualities, your special work-related skills, your transferrable skills, and related qualifications and accomplishments.

Furthermore, a Summary of Qualifications is easy to modify to be tailored to a particular position you are applying for.

### ***What is a Summary of Qualifications?***

- It is a paragraph and/or series of bullets placed near the top of your resume that allows someone to easily appreciate your qualifications at a glance. As employers often spend less than 20 seconds reading a resume, you can see how important this section can be. It should:
  - Showcase the qualities, skills and accomplishments that are your best selling points, *and*
  - Be as specific as possible to the job or type of job you are looking for.
  
- It can have different names:
  - Professional Profile
  - Qualifications Highlights
  - Skills Summary
  - Background Summary

### ***What content might be put in a Summary of Qualifications?***

- A phrase or bullet point addressing your communication skills;
- A phrase or bullet point addressing your computer skills;
- A phrase or bullet point addressing your interpersonal skills;
- A phrase or bullet point showcasing your particular job-related expertise;

- A phrase or bullet point speaking to your transferrable skills;
- A reference to the number of years of **job-related** experience you have; “15+” is a good guideline for mature workers;
- Highlights of your accomplishments, especially those that demonstrate the skills you’ve used throughout your career;
- Any particular degrees, licenses or certifications that are integral to the type of job you seek.

### **Customization to a job:**

- **It is important to modify these bullets to ensure they contain key words found in the job posting you are responding to.**

- Here’s a good example of a Summary of Qualifications for a home health aide:

#### **PROFESSIONAL PROFILE**

Responsible Home Health Aide with excellent communication skills demonstrated by over eight years of experience in home health care. Proficient in providing exceptional in-home support to patients with a wide range of disabilities, illnesses or other challenges.

- Certified Home Health Aide
- Knowledge of medical terminology
- Expertise in medication
- Assistance with daily living
- Behavioral documentation

- Here’s another good example of a Summary of Qualifications for an administrative position, written to correspond with a job listing taken from Indeed.com:

#### **Summary of Qualifications**

Reliable, organized, detail-oriented self-starter with strong administrative and customer service experience. Excellent oral and written communication skills. Strong team player with outstanding interpersonal skills and the ability to accept direction yet also work independently.

- 10+ years’ experience in office administration
  - Superior skills in organization, scheduling, reception and planning
  - Proficiency with Microsoft Word and Excel
- Notice: It begins with a series of adjectives and a noun:
- *“Reliable, organized, detail oriented self-starter”*
- Notice: It then has phrases and bullets that describe transferrable and job specific skills, such as:
- *“Excellent oral and written communication skills”*
  - *“Strong team player”*
  - *“10+ years’ experience in office administration”*
  - *“Proficient with Microsoft Word”*

**Please refer to the Resource document – “Resume Writing Aides” for use in writing your own Summary of Qualifications.**

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ACTIVITY – January 2016

### Skill Identification Activity

Are you having a hard time identifying the skills to put on your resume? Sometimes we take our abilities for granted, assuming everyone can do what we do. Use these exercises to help you clarify the transferrable skills and marketable personal traits you want to showcase on your resume.

#### **A. For Experienced Job Hunters in Transition**

**Answer these questions:**

1. Your boss always COUNTS ON YOU for something s/he thinks you're especially good at. What is it that s/he always counts on YOU for?
  
2. If you had to teach a bright new employee the "tricks of the trade" (i.e., how to do a GREAT job in your line of work), what special thing do YOU do that you could teach this eager, receptive new employee?
  
3. If you had to put together a TRAINING MANUAL for the kind of work you do best, how would you describe the MOST important thing it takes to do that job SUPERBLY?
  
4. When did you go above and beyond your job description, and MORE than earn your pay that day? What did you do?
  
5. What do you KNOW so well--or DO so well--that you could teach it to others? What's the MAIN TIP you'd tell people about how to do that LIKE A PRO?

6. IF your friends and/or co-workers were to BRAG about your skills, what would they say?

7. If YOU felt totally comfortable bragging about yourself, what would you brag about? What are you most PROUD of?

8. What DIFFICULTIES or barriers have you overcome to get where you are now? What skills helped you to overcome those difficulties?

9. What CREATIVE things have you done that you feel good about?

10. What PRAISE, awards, or acknowledgment did you get from your employers or customers?

11. Think of a PROBLEM that came up that had other people stumped, but that YOU were able to resolve. What did you do? What skills or abilities did you use?

12. If you suddenly had to leave the area for a while (say, to take care of an elderly or sick relative) what would your work buddies MISS about you while you're gone? How would their jobs be tougher, or less enjoyable, when you're not there to help?

## **B. For Adults with Little or NO PAID WORK HISTORY**

### **Answer these questions:**

1. Good friends and family count on each other for lots of things. What do YOUR friends and family count on YOU for?
2. What GOOD QUALITIES did you inherit from your family? What have you done that shows you have that quality?
3. Do you have any volunteer or community service experience that you're proud of? (For example, PTA, church, neighborhood organization.)
4. Which subjects were you best at in school? Why did you enjoy those particular studies?
5. What PRAISE or acknowledgment did you get from your teachers or trainers?
6. What do you KNOW so well--or DO so well--that you could teach it to others? What's the MAIN TIP you'd tell people about how to do that LIKE A PRO?
7. Think of a PROBLEM that came up that had other people stumped, but that YOU were able to do something about, to improve the situation. What did YOU do? What does that say about your abilities?

### **Source:**

From Yana Parker's Damn Good Resumes  
[www.damngood.com](http://www.damngood.com)

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# Resume Writing Aides

### *Sample Adjectives for a Summary of Qualifications:*

Accomplished	Accurate	Adaptable
Articulate	Analytical	Approachable
Customer-focused	Bilingual	Calm
Compassionate	Collaborative	Competent
Conscientious	Creative	Confident
Detail-oriented	Decisive	Diplomatic
Dynamic	Energetic	Enthusiastic
Entrepreneurial	Excellent	Exceptional
Experienced	Fair	Flexible
Focused	Goal-oriented	Hard working
High performing	Innovative	Insightful
Loyal	Meticulous	Motivated
Organized	Objective	Open-minded
Outstanding	Personable	Perceptive
Proactive	Productive	Proficient
Profit-minded	Proven	Quality-oriented
Quick	Reliable	Resilient
Resourceful	Respected	Resulted-oriented
Self-directed	Service-oriented	Sharp
Skilled	Solutions-oriented	Strong
Tactful	Take-charge	Team-oriented
Trusted	Versatile	Vital

### **Sample Nouns for a Summary of Qualifications:**

Achiever	Communicator	Contributor
Facilitator	Generalist	Go-getter
Implementer	Initiator	Innovator
Leader	Learner	Listener
Manager	Marketer	Morale builder
Motivator	Multi-tasker	Negotiator
Planner	Problem-solver	Producer
Professional	Relationship-builder	Risk-taker
Self-starter	Specialist	Team player
Time manager	Thinker	Troubleshooter

### **Sample Descriptive Phrases for a Summary of Qualifications, related to skills, strength, expertise:**

( Remember, these follow "I am a \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ who . . .")

- **To show your adaptability:**
  - "adapts well to a fast-paced and rapidly changing environment"
  - "exceptionally versatile and adaptable"
  
- **To show your expertise:**
  - "with demonstrated expertise in \_\_\_\_\_ while working at \_\_\_\_\_"
  - "whose interests include . . ."
  - "who is highly capable of . . ."
  
- **To show your communication skills:**
  - "Excellent verbal and written communication skills"
  - "Excellent listener, writer and communicator"
  
- **To show your customer service skills:**
  - "Committed to superior customer service"
  - "Adept at building relationships with internal and external customers"
  
- **To show your work ethic / quality:**
  - "Highly self-motivated and enthusiastic"
  - "Dedicated, loyal hard worker with a strong work ethic"
  - "Creative, sociable hard worker with a good sense of humor"
  - "Honest, hard-working, and dependable"
  - "Responsible, dedicated and highly organized"
  
- **To show your interpersonal skills:**
  - "Strong team player skilled at interacting with a wide variety of personalities"
  - "Personal, friendly and punctual"
  - "Pleasant and cooperative in a professional manner"

- **To show your multitasking abilities:**
  - “Is adept at juggling many assignments while keeping an emphasis on quality”
  - “Can manage multiple tasks in a pressured environment”
  
- **To show your organizational skills:**
  - “Detail oriented (noun) with excellent organizational and time management skills”
  - “is organized and attentive to detail”
  - “with a strong detail orientation and service focus”
  
- **To show you are a team player yet work well independently:**
  - “is equally effective performing independently and as a team member”
  - “is able to perform independently with minimal supervision”
  
- **To show willingness to learn:**
  - “is eager to take on new challenges”
  - “quick learner who can rapidly master all aspects of job with limited training”
  - “with demonstrable ability to learn and apply knowledge to new situations”