

## Network to Work Meeting

January 2020

### RESOURCE DOCUMENT – *RESUME CUSTOMIZATION*

## 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 would say 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, the Summary of Qualifications can easily be tailored to correspond to the requirements of each particular position you are applying for.

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

A Summary of Qualifications is a hard-hitting introductory paragraph and/or series of bullets placed near the top of your resume that is packed with your most sought-after skills, abilities, accomplishments, and attributes. It is your key to being noticed as it allows someone to readily 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.

The Summary should:

- Showcase the qualities, skills and accomplishments that are your best selling points, *and*
- ***Be customized to be as specific as possible to the job you are applying for.*** This includes containing the key words and phrases that are found in a job posting.

There are several ways that a Summary of Qualifications enhances your chances of being interviewed:

1. Its content and format offer a fresh approach versus the stale “resume objective” statement.

2. It highlights your potential value by incorporating a lot of valuable information into a small space. It makes a statement as to why you specifically are the best candidate.
3. Since it lets you include a high concentration of relevant key words and phrases, it gives your resume a greater chance of passing through the Applicant Tracking System software that screens out candidates.

### ***What content should you put in a Summary of Qualifications?***

The Summary of Qualifications normally contains 4 – 6 bullet points that highlight your crowning work achievements, skills and experiences. These could include any of the following:

- A phrase addressing your communication skills;
- A phrase addressing your computer skills;
- A phrase addressing your interpersonal skills, such as an example of your ability to form strong relationships or to successfully interact with customers and clients, with a focus on your professionalism;
- A phrase showcasing your particular job-related expertise;
- A phrase speaking to your transferrable skills;
- An example of a project that you started and completed, tying it to the company's success;
- An example of a major problem that you solved for your company, emphasizing your creativity;
- An example of your quickness or efficiency in completing your work;
- An example of how you met production deadlines while producing high quality work;
- An example of any work-related awards you have received, or any honors bestowed by your community;
- 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 and most impressive achievements, especially those that demonstrate the skills you've used throughout your career.

### ***Steps for Writing a Winning Career Summary***

1. **Conduct research on your ideal job.** Then identify the list of common job requirements and preferred qualifications for this ideal job.

2. **Assess your credentials.** Now compare your qualifications to those you identified in step one. Do you have what potential employers are looking for? Do you have additional qualifications to offer as an added bonus? Do you have specific skills or credentials you can offer to make up for others you may lack? Write a list of your top marketable credentials.

3. **Communicate the value you bring.** Start writing your summary in a way that brings in your top credentials –the ones that will capture the attention of the hiring manager. Include a synopsis of

your career achievements in order to highlight your dedication to results. Think about “how will the employer benefit from hiring me?”.

4. **Focus on your goal.** Your summary should focus on one targeted career or job goal. If you are applying for different types of positions, you should draft different summaries.

5. **Proofread and refine.** Make sure it is error free, persuasive, and specific. Avoid empty, generalized statements like “excellent communication skills”.

Here are some good examples of effective career summaries:

**SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS** (cashier)

- Cashier with 6+ years of experience working for major retailers and grocery stores;
- Served hundreds of shoppers during busy shifts, including a pre-Thanksgiving Day record of 314 shoppers checked and bagged;
- Trained 12 cashiers and sales associates at Nordstrom’s and helped acclimate them to the company and their work responsibilities;
- Well-spoken and easy to talk to, able to strike to conversations with customers and improve their shopping experience;
- Native English speaker and proficient in spoken Spanish;
- Coordinated the arrangement of autumn and winter holiday decorations, helping our Trader Joe’s receive the award for “Most Festive” California Branch in 2015;
- Awarded “Employee of the Month” on three separate occasions; received a cash bonus plus recognition from the corporate office for my exemplary work at Nordstrom’s.

**QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY** (for a Sales Clerk)

- **Proven Track Record** of boosting month to month sales figures by +10%;
- **Strong customer service skills:** Predict, evaluate, and meet the specific needs of customers;
- **Interpersonal skills:** Expert at getting product from the backroom to the floor in a cost-effective and timely manner;
- **Awarded** “Employee of the Month” for consistently receiving positive customer feedback.

### Qualifications Summary (for a Customer Service Professional)

Highly personable **Customer Service Professional** with experience in account management, claims and sales processing, and call-center operations within travel, insurance and governmental organizations.

- Talent for identifying customer needs and presenting appropriate company product and service offerings;
- Demonstrated ability to gain customer trust and provide exceptional follow-up, leading to increased repeat and referral business;
- Track record of assisting in the design and implementation of reporting procedures that reduce labor costs and improve customer-satisfaction ratings;
- Expertise in resolving escalated customer service issues;
- Secured numerous company achievement awards for delivery of exceptional customer service.

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