

Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association

Career Center Tips: **Economy-Proof Your Resume**



It's no secret that today's job market is extremely challenging. With more and more job candidates applying to fewer and fewer open positions, it may seem nearly impossible for you to get the attention of a potential employer.

How can you move your resume to the top of the pile? Consider the following suggestions for writing an economy-proof resume:

1. Don't simply update your old resume

If you haven't been on the job hunt for many years, it can be tempting to simply pull out the last resume you used, add your most recent accomplishments and send it out. But the document may be many years old, especially for park and recreation professionals who have a tendency to stay with an organization for extended periods of time, which also means the content is likely antiquated.

At the very least, give your resume a thorough review and weed out any information that is not applicable to your current career goals. You may, for example, remove positions you held in college or delete the mention of an old computer application. Or better yet, you may decide that it's even better to prepare your resume from scratch.

2. Consider your form

A chronological resume, in which you simply list your work experience in reverse chronological order, has long been the standard format that job seekers use. But in a downturn it may not be the best style for showcasing your skills and experience.

If you have frequent or large gaps in your employment history, you may want to use what is referred to as a combination resume instead. A combination resume places the most emphasis on your skills and accomplishments, downplaying your previous positions and dates of employment. Rather than having a section called "Work Experience" serve as the bulk of your resume, for instance, you might have sections titled "Administrative Experience," "Computer Skills" and

"Management and Training Skills." A combination resume still details your work history, but this information is abbreviated and placed near the end of the document.

A combination resume also could be a good choice if you are hoping to switch careers. If you don't have experience that relates directly to your new path, this format allows you to highlight transferable skills that are applicable to the position you seek.

3. Focus on the bottom line

Companies today are looking for ways to reduce expenses and increase efficiencies. When detailing the positions you've held in the past, be sure to mention how you've helped boost a former employer's bottom line. If you worked as a park supervisor, rather than saying "filed park reports" or "approved park permits," try something like this: "Identified new park equipment vendor, resulting in cost savings of 25 percent." Be as specific as possible when describing your achievements, and don't be afraid to brag a little.

4. Customize your content

One of the most important steps when crafting your resume is to target your content to each company and position. Rather than creating a standard document for use with every opportunity, customize your resume so it speaks directly to a potential employer's unique needs.

This may mean highlighting different accomplishments or going into greater detail about certain contributions, for instance. Doing so might take a little extra time and effort, but submitting a targeted resume demonstrates your knowledge of and interest in each position and will help you stand apart from other job candidates.

5. Use your cover letter

Like many job seekers, you may have extended gaps in your work history due to current economic conditions. The cover letter allows you to address any concerns an employer may have about these gaps. In it, explain how you've kept your skills up-to-date since your last full-time position, whether through temporary assignments, volunteer work or professional development courses.

6. Check for mistakes

It takes just one or two typographical errors on a resume to remove a candidate from contention for an open position. Employers see typos, misspellings and grammatical mistakes as a sign you lack professionalism and attention to detail. And in today's environment, hiring managers are less willing to take a chance on applicants who seem unqualified. Use the spell-check function and ask friends and family to proofread your resume before you send it out.

One last piece of advice: Use your **WPRA network** to your advantage. Even if your resume is solid, having a professional contact who can refer you for an open position or personally hand your document to a hiring manager could be key to landing the role you seek.