

## **How to Create a Resume For Foreign Markets**

**By Myriam-Rose Kohn**

If you're applying for an overseas job with an international company, you might consider translating your resume as a courtesy to hiring managers. But unless you're fluent in the company's primary language, translating education, work experience and other details of your life can be tricky.

The streamlined resume format that's popular in the U.S. these days may not work abroad. For instance, recruiters in Europe, Asia and the Middle East typically look for requirements you wouldn't normally include on a concise American resume, such as citizenship and passport data, your date and place of birth and your marital status.

Curricula Vitae (what resumes are called in most countries) that are created for a foreign market should be understated to the point of being self-effacing, and should contain substantive rather than active verbs. Using the same word more than once on a page is considered poor form, since repeating a word is a sign that you don't know the language well. Good language skills are weighed heavily by hiring managers and are a prerequisite for just about any managerial job overseas.

Another difference between resumes created for the U.S. and foreign markets is that your experience should be listed chronologically, starting with your first job and ending with your most recent position. This is exactly the opposite approach used by most U.S. candidates.

European employers often request that your resume be written in your own handwriting. This allows them to judge you for neatness and proper use of language (assuming that you wrote it yourself). The letter also can be submitted for handwriting analysis, which supposedly would reveal the type of person you are, thus eliminating the need for you to send a profile of your personal attributes.

Candidates sending their credentials to staffing agencies via e-mail are urged to keep their documents as short as possible: Include only where you've worked, for how long and just a few lines describing what you did. Personal information is still required.

Higher-level candidates should adhere to the traditional format described above. Executive recruiters still want to see as much information as possible.

## **Educational Achievements**

In Asia, the schools you've attended are critically important, so if you're applying for a job there, list your alma maters under the "education" heading, starting with kindergarten and elementary school. The thinking is that if you were fortunate enough to have been born into a wealthy family, you would have attended more prestigious schools than those with lesser means. This attitude perpetuates the region's caste system. Competition is so fierce that children often are enrolled prior to their birth to ensure a place on the roster of a "prestigious" nursery school and kindergarten.

Schools typically provide letters of reference, as do former employers, and you should include those that you feel would be most relevant with your curriculum vitae.

## **Translation Help**

If you decide to seek help translating your resume, be sure an accredited translator handles the work. Remember, a simple word such as president can be translated as president (French) or presidente (Spanish) to indicate the president of a country, but in a European company, that title indicates an executive two ranks lower on the corporate ladder than the U.S. equivalent.

Since you're providing a translation to be courteous and create goodwill, image is everything, and a reputable translation agency can become a powerful ally. Make sure your translator uses a three-check system -- a translator, editor and proofreader -- and employs accredited translators. This approach assures quality control, since a translated text could have variations. If the translator and editor don't agree on your intent, then the meaning of your text isn't clear and could be misinterpreted. Once your resume is completed, the proofreader will verify proper spelling, grammar and punctuation, which eliminates misunderstandings and minimizes errors.

Translators are accredited only after passing a rigorous three-hour exam administered by the American Translators Association in Alexandria, Va. (703-683-6100). The test is so exacting that only 20% to 30% of all candidates have passed in the last five years, ATA reports.

Equally important is that someone who works in the same discipline or industry as you, especially if you're in a scientific field translate your work. To stay current, most translators have a niche in which they become expert.

Thus, an excellent legal translator will know the laws of the country your resume is going to and from.

If you would like to work overseas, the same rules apply as for a foreigner wishing to work in the U.S. First you must find an employer willing to sponsor you. The U.S. demands just as much appropriate documentation as Europe does. Workers and employees can move around freely from one European nation country to another and obtain employment, but someone from the U.S. would have to find an employer who would be willing to fill out all the required paperwork prior to the employee or executive arriving over there. Once all documents are completed, the recruited person must first of all check in with the municipality where he or she will be settling in before actual employment can begin.

### **Get It Right**

You should determine exactly where your resume would be sent before enlisting a translator's help. If you request a Spanish translation, do you want Castilian Spanish or another variation? Your answer depends on whether you're mailing your resume to Spain, Mexico, El Salvador or Argentina, to name a few countries where Spanish vocabularies differ.

The same applies to French: Canadian and Guyanese French differ in many ways from standard French. Good translators don't translate just words, but their meaning and intent, so they must know the cultural (and sometimes even historical) context of the area where your translated resume will be sent.

An illustration of this point can be found in "A Consumer's Guide to Good Translation" published by the ATA: "L'ingresso e vietato ai non addetti ai lavori." If you focus on the words in this Italian sentence, you might produce this baffling translation: "The entry is forbidden to those not associated with the works." An experienced translator understands that the task isn't to change words, but to offer the right meaning. How would this sentence be expressed best in an American context? "Unauthorized entry prohibited."

Now visualize this process in reverse and you'll have an idea of what's involved when trying to create a resume that makes sense and sells your skills effectively in another language. Three years of foreign-language instruction in high school might help you order in a foreign restaurant, but it probably isn't enough background for you to translate your resume successfully.