

HOW TO:



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

西交利物浦大学

**WRITE
AN EFFECTIVE
RESUME**

JOHN LATTO

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

HOW TO:

WRITE AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

JOHN LATTO



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

西交利物浦大学

RIBA 
Royal Institute of British Architects

This guidance note forms part of a series of continually developing collection of resources available to graduating students seeking placement within practice as part of their professional development.

Other sections within the series are:

1. Write The Letter of Introduction
2. Write an Effective Resume
3. Preparing the Portfolio
4. The Interview

John Latto BArch(Hons) ARB RIBA ARIAS

Teaching Fellow

Department of Architecture and Design

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

8 Chongwen Road

Suzhou Dushu Lake Science and Education Innovation District

Suzhou Industrial Park

Suzhou

P. R. China

215123

Email: john.latto@xjtlu.edu.cn

Web: www.xjtlu.edu.cn

Version 1.1 - June 2010

“The challenge of life, I have found, is to build a resume that doesn't simply tell a story about what you want to be, but it's a story about who you want to be.” - Oprah Winfrey

INTRODUCTION

The transition from University as a student, into the professional environment of the Practice studio, can be daunting and exciting.

The most challenging part of this process is how to 'stand out' from the volume of applications received by practices, often for those few precious available positions. What is important to understand, is that there is no magic formula, however there are generally accepted protocols or approaches, which can increase the chances of catching the notice of employers and open an opportunity of moving forward in the selection process.

This paper seeks to provide some useful guidance and advice, collected from various sources for the resume or CV which would normally accompany any application along with the Covering Letter and Portfolio. This is primarily focused on seeking positions in professional practice for internships or graduates.

1.

INTRODUCTION

The resume is so key to securing that chance to move forward in the selection process and possibly to interview. Along with your portfolio, it's the commonly accepted means for employers to screen applications and it's therefore so important in communicating your skills, experience, creativity, and personality. Get it wrong and the application will unfortunately not progress.

There is no magic formula, but a resume should contain the following key information:

1. A summary statement
2. Educational Background
3. Work Experience
4. Skills
5. Additional Relevant Information
6. References

2

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

In your architectural career, you will journey through various phases along the way, as you gain experience, skills and different motivations. The resume is something you will continually refine and update to ensure it captures an accurate picture of your status. In this paper, the focus is providing guidance and advice on those early professional career opportunities.

Resumes for architectural internships

This can seem a challenging task, given that you are very likely to have had no experience of working in practice, however Employers will be aware of this. It's important therefore that you can show your motivation and experience in other ways. You should try to include any positions of responsibility you have held, in High School and / or University. You can also list competitions or projects you have worked on and what YOU contributed. If you have had any part-time employment then consider what skills you learned there which could be transferrable, such as team-working, collaboration, leadership etc.

Resumes for Final Year graduates

As a graduate completing your final year you may have gained some limited practice experience, so writing your resume becomes slightly easier. You will have maintained a Work Experience Plan, which can assist in writing these.

List your placement(s) in time order, as you would regular jobs, specifying the tasks you did and how your contribution added value. Again, Employers understand that as a recent graduate, your resume is always going to be thin – this is why you should ensure your portfolio really shows what you're capable of. At this stage of your career, you will mostly be judged on your potential.

Resumes for Masters Graduates

As a newly graduated Masters student, your focus will become more on obtaining professional experience to allow you to progress in practice. At this point in your career, you may have a clearer vision of your own values and the path you would ideally like to follow and therefore the practices you would seek to target for employment. The question of professional accreditation may also be part of your consideration and influence your decisions. The resume should therefore be more developed and include all of your previous placement(s) in time order, again with contribution and experience gained.

2

CONTENT

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

This is a concise and to the point opening statement, which explains what you have to offer, your strengths and achievements. Generally 3 to 4 lines which can be made specific to the role you are applying for.

2. EDUCATION

As a new graduate, this section will perhaps form the most important part of your resume. It should include:

- positions of authority or responsibility you may have held
- any competitions, articles or projects you have contributed to.
- any awards you have been given.
- list extra curricular activities or workshops.

Qualifications should be listed in reverse chronological order, with the highest ones listed first.

The listing should include the name of the Educational Establishment, together with the dates attended and qualifications gained.

3. EXPERIENCE

As explained previously, this may be limited depending on your level of study, however in the same way as in Education, you should list the most recent positions first. This should include the Employers Name, dates of placement and experience gained.

4. SKILLS

This is perhaps a key part of a students resume, to highlight to employers your abilities and skills. Be aware of any specific skill levels that employers are seeking and make sure these are highlighted in your resume clearly. Very often resumes are screened against a list of such specified skills and if these do not show on your application it can be a negative result.

You should be aware of both your 'hard' skills such as model making, Rhino, AutoCad etc but also your 'Soft' skills such as team-working, leadership, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving. Also be aware through research, what employers are looking for from their candidates and ensure you cover these in your resume.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You may consider including additional information which will give the employer a more rounded picture of you as an individual. It's important to realise that employers are also interested in how you might interact within the practice and so gain an impression of your personality. This may include additional interests or pursuits, painting, sketching, photography, badminton etc. together with any achievements in these.

6. REFERENCES

Often a debated point, but very often employers will state that they require the names of references and often how many references they require. These are normally to be provided at the time of application. In the case of internships, this is most likely to be an Academic reference, however for those with some working experience, these may also include a previous employer.

Please ensure that you obtain the permission of the referee in advance, so that they can be prepared for any contact.

COMMON MISTAKES

In compiling the resume, its easy to be fall into the trap of making simple mistakes which recruiters and employers have identified:

1. **Not explaining or identifying what YOU have done** - It's important to highlight the experience clearly and logically. Also to summarise your role/responsibility.
2. **Too long** - ideally the resume should be no more than 2 pages. The resume is a concise checklist of the skills and experiences you have acquired, that are relevant to the position you are applying. Avoid including numerous irrelevant or minute details. Describe your roles and experience in a clear concise manner.
3. **Irrelevant Detail** - Often this is a problem because some candidates try to create a generic resume that they can send to numerous architecture firms. Unfortunately, this easy route doesn't often lead to successful invitations to interview.
4. **Over designed** - It's a debate where it can be argued a graphically designed resume, can demonstrate the creative abilities of the individual. This can be true, however this needs to be carefully managed and can also link stylistically with the portfolio.

5. Avoid bland or empty phrases - phrases which in effective are generic and say nothing. "Talented, self-motivated designer with a track record of success." Your comments should communicate your personality and objectives in an honest and enthusiastic way.

6. Poor Spelling and grammer - always check, check and check again!

7. Non specific - the resume needs to highlight those skills which are being sought by employers in the posting or you feel appropriate to the position from your research. This is a reason why resumes should be tailored to specific companies.

3

TOP TIPS

The following Top 10 tips for your architecture resume are taken from the Website Archisoup (<https://www.archisoup.com>) and give some useful advice:

1. KISS – Keep it short and simple

Remember two as your maximum number. Don't go over two pages, two fonts, or two colours. Some recruiters insist resumes should only have black text on a white background, but people working in the creative industries tend to be given more flexibility. Simple infographics can show complex information at a glance, but don't resort to gimmicks.

2. Tailor it each time

Don't send out the same resume every time you apply for a job. Show the recruiter that you've spent time researching their company, and thinking about the requirements of the job they have advertised (if indeed they have). Make it clear how your particular set of skills and experience will benefit them.

3. Spend time on your summary statement

It is said that we form an impression of other people within seven seconds of meeting them. The first thing a recruiter will notice about your resume is its design, but the first thing they will *read* is your summary statement. Make sure it captures all of your strengths and achievements, and really sells you as a candidate.

4. Say what you did

Recruiters don't want to know what your organisation or your project team did, because that isn't who they're hiring. Describe the work that *you personally did*, and why it was

helpful. Did you save the company money, attract a new client, design a new way of doing things, or win particular praise from a colleague? Think about what makes you stand out from all the other applicants.

5. Quantify your achievements

Be as specific as you can when talking about your work. Saying that you attracted new clients is good; saying that you attracted clients X, Y and Z, leading to a 10% increase in income over a two-year period, is better.

6. Indicate your proficiency level in skills and software

A quick way for potential employers to understand your strengths is to list common skills and software packages on your resume and give yourself a proficiency rating (e.g. from one to ten) in each. This is a bit of a balancing act, however. Never say you're more competent than you are, in case your skills are put to the test during the recruitment process – but equally, don't include anything that paints you in an unfavourable light. If you're not so great at something, leave it off your resume. If you have formal skills certification in any software, this should be highlighted as this clearly demonstrates a recognised proficiency.

7. Explain gaps in a positive way

Always account for any gaps in your employment history; glossing over them looks like you have something to hide. It's fine to (briefly) mention travel, volunteering and unrelated paid work, especially if you can say what you learnt from those experiences.

8. Check spelling, grammar and punctuation

No, you're not applying for a job as a writer – but attention to detail is a skill no architect can do without. A single spelling mistake can make your resume look unprofessional. There are computer programs that help you check your work, but they won't pick up everything. It's a good idea to proofread your resume at least twice and on different days, so you see it with fresh eyes, and better still...

9. Get feedback from someone you trust

Don't send off your resume without having had another pair of eyes on it. Obviously, it won't be possible to have someone

look at every version you tweak during an applications marathon, but when you've created a basic version that you're happy with, ask a trusted mentor or colleague for their opinion.

10. Submit your portfolio separately

Combined resumes and portfolios can feel arduous to get through. Submit the two separately, and be mindful of the size of your portfolio. Don't send an attachment larger than 5MB, and aim for five to ten pages in total.



HELPFUL REFERENCES / EXAMPLES

The following provide some additional detailed guidance along with some useful templates:

ArchDaily: Top Architecture Resumes

<https://www.archdaily.com/793375/the-top-architecture-resume-cv-designs>

Archisoup: How to write an effective resume

<https://www.archisoup.com/studio-guide/creating-an-architecture-resume>