

**CAREER**

**REINVENTION**

**BOOTCAMP**

**Module 10:**  
Resumes and  
Cover Letters

**Workbook**

## BUILDING YOUR REINVENTION TOOLKIT: RÉSUMÉ, COVER LETTER, ELEVATOR PITCH

This week we begin polishing your reinvention tools! Having your “toolkit” ready helps jump-start your career reinvention. These items allow you to introduce yourself to a contact, explain to your target audience what you’re about, pique the interest of a potential hiring manager and respond immediately to a job listing. Preparing your reinvention tools in advance ensures that you can quickly follow up on every interesting opportunity that comes your way.

Let’s dive right in...

### *What tools do you need?*

There are several things you must prepare before reinventing your career:

1. An up-to-date résumé
2. A great cover letter
3. A 30-second “elevator pitch”
4. A personal business card
5. A presence on a social networking website
6. Your own website (optional, but useful if you have a portfolio or need to attract clients)

Your goal is to weave your “reinvention story” into your tools. The most important tool on the list is your résumé:

*“Your goal is to weave your reinvention story into your tools.”*



## REINVENTION TOOL #1: YOUR RÉSUMÉ

Your résumé is a sales and marketing document whose purpose is to make people pick up the phone and call you. It is NOT meant to be an exhaustive list of every job you've held! Many people make the mistake of including far too much detail, but as with all sales and marketing documents brevity is crucial. Arrange your résumé in a visually attractive format so that the most important and relevant information is quickly accessible. The goal is to have someone glance at your résumé for 10 seconds and say: "Call this one back!"

### What do you need from a good reinvention résumé?

For the purposes of this week's lesson, we are going to assume that you know the basic structure of a standard, chronological résumé (if not, go online; there are plenty of good books and articles on the topic). From a career reinvention perspective, however, the question is: If I want to make a change, how should I rework my résumé? Here are the sections of importance:

**The Objective:** When reinventing your career, the objective is generally not helpful because you are seeking to make a change from what you've done in the past. If your objective doesn't match your background, it becomes meaningless. We recommend dispensing with this section.

**Candidate Profile or Summary of Qualifications:** From a career reinvention perspective, this is a very valuable section. You can use it to provide a description of your qualities, skills and talents; this summary can be shaped to target your new career.

Use language that creates a "picture" of you as a candidate; the stronger the visual image, the more effective this section will be. The following examples illustrate this point:

- ▶ **Media professional with 15 years' experience**
- ▶ **Seasoned media executive who has built businesses from the ground up**

The first example is boring; it just states a fact. The second example creates an exciting, go-getter image. Which candidate do you think the hiring manager will call?

For visual presence, format your profile in a bulleted list so that it catches the eye. Using four or five statements in this section is standard.

**Highlight yourself up front!**

With a résumé your goal is to write an effective summary of qualifications or a candidate profile that showcases your background in a way that appeals to your target. You support these statements by listing tangible, quantifiable accomplishments that demonstrate your talents and your abilities for each job.

**EXAMPLE: Before and after for someone in international business development:**

BEFORE:

*Business development sales person for entertainment properties.*

AFTER:

*Savvy relationship manager with a network of top-level decision makers in “blue-chip” media companies.*

OR

*Accomplished, creative deal negotiator who has achieved profitable agreements in competitive markets.*

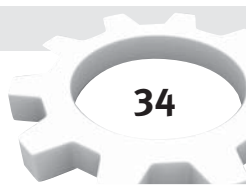
Note the use of descriptive language and powerful, action-oriented verbs.

**Summary of Qualifications exercise**

Using the list of skills, experience and qualities desired by your target from last week’s exercise, take a moment to draft a summary of your qualifications. Use language that creates a “picture” of you as a candidate. As with all good writing, the stronger the visual image, the more effective. Do not rehash your job functions!

**MY SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS:**

- ▶ \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ \_\_\_\_\_



## Accomplishments

It's amazing how many people forget to add their successes to each job listing. From a reinvention perspective, accomplishments are crucial because they show potential employers you have a history of creating positive, tangible results. Another benefit is that when you identify your accomplishments, you will see that many of the skills and talents it took to achieve them are most likely transferable to your new career.

It may be a challenge, however, to come up with that list of accomplishments. It helps to analyze each job using the acronym PAR:

- ▶ **P stands for Problem:** Here is where you identify the problem, opportunity or the challenge of the position. By pinpointing the problem, opportunity or challenge, you can then define "A."
- ▶ **A stands for Action:** This is the action you took to solve a problem, overcome a challenge, or maximize an opportunity. Once you have identified the actions you took, you are ready to summarize "R."
- ▶ **R' stands for Result:** Your results show exactly what you accomplished in response to the problem, opportunity or challenge. These results then become your list of accomplishments. Each accomplishment must satisfy one of three requirements:
  1. **They should be specific:**  
*"Launched video product line in Europe"*  
*"Implemented financial database for all branch divisions"*  
*"Created franchising guidelines for retail store division"*
  2. **They should be identifiable:**  
*"Managed accounts for Nike, Adidas and Reebok"*  
*"Contributed articles to Travel + Leisure, Gourmet and New York Magazine"*  
*"Presented Internet sales tax recommendations to Congress in 2004"*
  3. **They should be quantifiable:**  
*"Increased sales by 20 percent in the first year"*  
*"Put on a conference for more than 50 outside distributors"*  
*"Brought in new client billings worth \$3.5 million in 2003"*

*"From a reinvention perspective, accomplishments are crucial because they show potential employers you have a history of creating positive, tangible results."*

Identify three to four accomplishments from your most recent job. If you were there less than a year, one or two accomplishments is sufficient. For previous positions, two or three accomplishments are enough.

**Using the PAR framework, take a moment to list three accomplishments from your three most recent jobs:**

**JOB #1:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**JOB #2:**

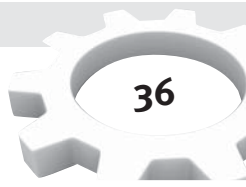
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**JOB #3:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Now let's discuss some other things you will need to know when crafting a "reinvention résumé":**

**Language:** Every industry has its own "language," and it is important to identify the language of your target career and use it in your materials. An easy way to become familiar with the language of your new field is by reading its trade publications. Include the new language wherever you can; the only exception to this rule is be with your job titles. If your current or past positions are called something else in your target career, don't change them. Just use the new language in the description of each job function.



**Volunteer & Other Unpaid Work:** If your current job doesn't provide you with the opportunity to develop the skills you need for your target career, you may have to draw on skills developed through volunteerism or other unpaid work. To handle this situation, create an identifying section on your résumé called "Volunteer" or "Other Experience." (If you are an aspiring writer this section could be called "Articles and Publications"). Then record your relevant experience the same way you would a job, including a summary description of what you did and a list of accomplishments. FYI, you are free to include skills and talents developed through volunteerism and unpaid work in your Summary of Qualifications/Candidate Profile. Make sure, though, that you have quantifiable achievements to back up your claims!

**Tell the Truth:** While it's good to be creative when reinventing your career (in fact, it's necessary!), be careful that you don't fall into the trap of being "creative" in a way that crosses the line. In other words, be honest about your skills, talents and qualifications; don't misrepresent or embellish what you've done. A good rule of thumb to follow: Don't include any statements, accomplishments or activities that cannot be independently verified.

## REINVENTION TOOL #2: COVER LETTER

What's the goal of a cover letter? A cover letter, like the résumé, is a sales and marketing document that's designed to make people want to call you! It is NOT a long dissertation on why you're looking for a new job, nor is it a repeat of the content on your résumé. The cover letter is a prime opportunity to set yourself apart; if you take the time to craft an interesting, compelling letter, you will greatly increase your response rate!

### The Requirements of a Reinvention Cover Letter

From a career reinvention perspective, your cover letter must explain how your background is relevant to your target career. Do NOT leave this for your prospective employer to figure out! If you cannot explain how what you have done applies to their situation, they certainly won't be able to understand. This is a quick way to end up in the "no thanks" pile.

You must analyze job postings (or network with your contacts) to determine what skills, talents and results your target market wants in your desired role. Your reinvention cover letter should then clearly describe how your skills and talents will be useful in helping prospective employers achieve their goals.

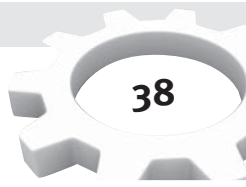


For this, you must learn to describe your background in a different way. List the job functions you've performed that are directly relevant to what they're seeking, and include your accomplishments using the PAR framework.

**More tips for writing an effective reinvention cover letter:**

- ▶ **Keep it short.**  
No more than one page, maximum!
- ▶ **“Close” the deal!**  
This means asking for the interview and, if it's not a blind posting, telling the prospect you'll follow up with them.
- ▶ **Stay away from opinions.**  
Do not make statements about your work that are basically a matter of opinion. For example, do not say “Wrote witty and hilarious copy for 10 websites.” “Witty and hilarious” is a matter of opinion; “Wrote copy for 10 websites” is a statement of fact.
- ▶ **Use the language of the industry.**  
As with the résumé, include terms that are commonly used in your target industry or, if you're responding to an advertised position, include some of the language from the listing. Do NOT, however, just copy every phrase from the posting in your letter—this will make you look unimaginative. Take a few key phrases (look for their ‘hot buttons’) and weave them into your letter.
- ▶ **Make your letter about them, not you.**  
This is a subtle problem. Because you're pitching them, you cannot avoid talking about yourself. But be careful that you don't fall into the “I” trap where your whole letter is focused on what you want. Danger phrases include: ‘I'm looking for a change’, ‘I would love to work for your company’, ‘This position sounds like a great opportunity for me’. These types of sentences are big red flags to hiring managers; they indicate that the candidate is more concerned about getting their needs met than helping the company achieve its goals. To avoid this trap, change your phrasing to statements such as: “I'd like to discuss how my skills and talents can help you,” “I'm confident that I can add value to your team,” or “I'd like to make a contribution to your mission.”

*Make  
your letter  
about them,  
not you.*







**An elevator pitch is usually one to three sentences. It always contains the following four elements:**

1. What you do: A quick summary of yourself as a candidate
2. Who you do it for: The types of firms or individuals that would find your services helpful; your target
3. What value you bring: The benefit to a potential firm by hiring you
4. How you want to be perceived by the target: The qualities for which you want to be known

Any elevator pitch you craft must pass what's called the "So what?" test. This means that your story must be interesting, compelling and useful enough that your target prospect cannot say "so what?" in response to your pitch.

**Here's an example of an elevator pitch for a consultant:**

*"I provide sophisticated business analysis to fast-growing technology companies that help them increase revenues by 50 percent."* (Other results could be: "helps them decrease their technology spending by 20 percent," or "launch new product lines in half the time," or "identify lucrative overseas markets," etc.)

### **Elevator Pitch Exercise**

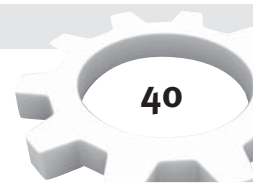
Take a moment to brainstorm the components of your elevator pitch to your target market:

1. What do I do? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who do I do this for? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What value do I bring? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How do I want to be perceived? \_\_\_\_\_

## **REINVENTION TOOL #4: PERSONAL BUSINESS CARDS**

If you have already left your previous job, it is useful to create a "personal business card." It's helpful to have one even if you are still in that job; it's very bad form to ask prospective employers to e-mail or call you at the office of your current employer.

The personal business card contains your name and personal contact details, including phone number and personal e-mail address (make sure your e-mail address projects a professional or neutral image; if not, set up a new one specifically for this purpose). Although it's not required you can also include the "What you do" from your elevator pitch to help people categorize you in your target career.



## REINVENTION TOOL #5: SOCIAL NETWORKING PROFILE

In today's world, employers turn to the web to find out about you. One way to control your image is to create profiles on the major social networking websites—especially the ones used for business (e.g., LinkedIn and Naymz). Apart from their great networking opportunities, these sites offer a chance to showcase more fully your experience and background.

Be aware that social networking sites may contain hidden pitfalls. Stories abound of employers that nixed candidates because they came across “too much information” on someone's MySpace or Facebook page. Google yourself periodically to see what's out there about you on the web, and make sure to clean up any embarrassing information.

## REINVENTION TOOL #6: WEBSITE

If you are looking to make a shift into a field where building a clientele is important (consulting, coaching, freelance work, etc.) or you have a portfolio of work that you'll want to show to prospects, a website is a useful tool. More cost-effective and easily updatable than a brochure, a website confers a sense of legitimacy on your reinvention efforts. Your site can include samples of your work; a listing of what services or products you offer; any awards, press or accomplishments you have earned; and client testimonials. All your contact information should be easily accessible—don't make prospects work too hard to reach you!

