

## **Sweating the Small Stuff on Your Lawyer Resume**

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You may already know the resume basics when it comes to drafting your lawyer resume: how to use the right keywords, where to put the most important information, how to use bullets with active verbs, etc. But are you also sweating the small stuff? A missing period or a different sized hyphen might not make or break your resume, but when you realize that your lawyer resume is also considered a writing sample by most employers, the small stuff can take on a whole new level of importance. Here is a list of details most often overlooked by lawyers in their resumes:

### **Being Consistent With Date Formatting**

We are not talking about the obvious mistake of not including a date, having an unexplained gap in the resume, or not updating your last date of employment. These are things that the majority of candidates know to avoid in their lawyer resumes. What we are looking for are in the details. For instance, using consistent format, spacing, and hyphens when including dates.

If you are going to use this format:

May 2008 – July 2009

Then, stay consistent throughout your resume, and do not later use these alternatives:

May 2008-July 2009, or May, 2009 – July, 2009, or 2008-2009

Again, none of these changes are critical. However, if you want to impress your resume reader with your consistency and attention to details, this is the place to do it. Pick one style and stick to it.

### **Using An Employer's Full Legal Name**

Most candidates drafting their lawyer resumes know the rule of completely spelling out a current or former employer's name. Abbreviations have no place on a resume when it comes to identifying an employer. However, to be completely accurate, one should always refer to the full legal name of his or her employer. That means minding the "Inc. and LLP" that are often part of a law firm or company's full legal name.

Therefore, if you worked at Paul Hastings, you should refer to your law firm as: Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP

If you worked with BlackRock, you should refer to the company as: BlackRock, Inc.

Why shortchange your legal employer's name when you don't have to? This is again another opportunity to show that you know the difference between "good enough" and "absolutely perfect."

## **Spelling Out Your Degrees**

You have probably worked long and hard to include those fancy degrees on your resume. Why should you reduce them to abbreviations? Clearly, everyone knows what a J.D. or a B.A. stands for. The point is to be thorough in your writing and avoid unnecessary abbreviations. When listing your degrees, think about spelling them out completely:

- Juris Doctorate or Juris Doctor
- Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science
- Masters in Business Administration

You should also consider including your major (i.e. Bachelor of Arts in History). This is not sweating the small stuff depending on the position you are applying to. In fact, this could have significant bearing on your lawyer resume. For instance, if you are an intellectual property attorney, including your undergraduate technical degree is not just a way to impress potential employers, but it is often a requirement for the position. If you are applying for a position with a financial services company, including your undergraduate degree in finance or accounting could help get you selected for an interview over a similar candidate without this kind of background.

## **Including Your Admission Year**

The majority of lawyer resumes include a separate bar admission section. The importance of including your bar status is evident. What about including the year of admission? Some senior-level lawyers hesitate to include their admission year for fear of age discrimination. However, bar status is regularly checked by employers, so omitting it will not hide one's seniority or sidestep any potential age discrimination issues.

The key is to be thorough in your lawyer resume. You have to provide a potential employer all of the pertinent information he or she will need to evaluate you. To include your year of admission allows a potential employers to quickly determine whether you have the required level of experience for the position, whether you will be eligible to waive into a jurisdiction, or whether you will have to sit for another bar exam if you are applying to an out-of-state position.

So if you are out to impress employers with your lawyer resume, be sure to sweat the small stuff. That's one sure way to show them that you are polished, thorough, and know how to deliver a flawless work product.