

Resume Tips For Technical Grads

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The hurdles facing today's new technology graduates are the same as with other industries. One of the largest hurdles for new grads in preparing a first IT resume is the "no-experience" fence. A hi-tech grad may not have any formal experience working with technology in a real-world situation. While this hurdle is best handled long before you graduate by seeking part-time or full-time employment in technology or an internship, the fact remains that you may be coming out of col...

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Preparing an IT resume for a target career field in which you have no "real" experience can be a challenge. It's important when outlining your IT resume to keep in mind what the hiring managers will be seeking when reading your resume. In the technical arena, Skills, Education, and Training are high on the list of items for which hiring managers scan the IT resume.

Lisa Lowe sought professional assistance on her resume, realizing that she faced a significant problem by not having an internship in a technical field under her belt before graduation. Additionally, she realized the skills she had gained in college were slightly behind the fast-paced demand of today's market and she needed to attain further training in some of the more modern technologies. These training goals were mentioned in both the lead Summary and in the accompanying cover letter.

By including a Skills category in the top half of the first page of her IT resume, Lisa's resume becomes much more "user-friendly" to hiring managers. Lisa was fairly sure she didn't want to start her career as a programmer, but was interested in working with database technology. To emphasize this, her database-related skills were listed first and a mention of her preference was made in the Summary. By focusing on this direction with her career, she was also de-emphasizing her lack of training in the more modern programming languages such as Visual Basic and C.

Many times, resume books advise new grads to list coursework in the major to illustrate what the job seeker did in school. While this might give an idea of your academic record, it does not help in making you or your IT resume stand out as someone whom the company should interview. It also does not show how you have assimilated and applied the formal education. A Project Synopsis describing how you have applied the skills might better serve to distinguish

your IT resume from the resumes of other recent grads. For example, in Lisa's resume, the Project Synopsis was included in the Education section in the top half of the first page and gives some "meat" to her experience.

The Employment History section of a new grad resume is often the most difficult section to compose, especially if you do not have an internship, cooperative, or related experience under your belt. Rather than concentrating on what is not present in experience, try to concentrate on what is present. Look for skills that will be required by employers that may not have been taught in college. More and more companies are looking for well-rounded employees who not only can do the technical tasks but who can work with the public, work in a team, and generally get along in a positive manner. Emphasize your team-spirit, your communication skills, and your enthusiasm to work hard.

"We look for skills but we also look for someone who can get along in the work environment," says Jeremy Hopwood, CEO of Tsaba Networks (www.tsaba.com) in Franklin, Tennessee. "If you have the right attitude to work in our team, we will provide you with the specialized training we need."

Lisa had worked throughout her college career in a high-public-contact position providing Customer Service on technical sales of retail software and hardware. This experience demonstrated that she possessed the ability to work well with people who needed technical assistance or who were in a contentious frame of mind. She had excellent communication skills, good negotiation abilities, and a strong grasp of business operations. By bringing into her IT resume past work history that demonstrates positive skills and work habits, she is shown to be someone who is accustomed to a high stress work environment, who can work with people, and who is probably very trainable for the company's specific needs.

If there is an internship or cooperative learning experience, be sure to include that in the Experience category of your IT resume. Detail project parameters, discuss skills exercised, and outline context of the position in relation to the overall organizational operation. Be sure to highlight what was achieved and what significant contributions were made. When composing the content of the resume, write descriptively to fully cover the work done and the skills attained.

"My internships and cooperatives were my best selling point with my education coming second," states Robert Higgins, a civil engineer with Barge, Waggoner, Sumner, and Cannon in Nashville, Tennessee. "I had worked full-time as an Engineering Technician throughout my entire college career and it led directly to permanent employment. The experience was invaluable."

Other information that is helpful to have on a hi-tech grad resume includes grade point average (if above 3.5), membership in professional organizations, scholarships and honors, volunteer work, and civic involvement. Information of this type on an IT resume shows a well-rounded picture of what type of employee the company would be gaining.

Developing an interview-winning IT resume can be a challenge. Making the investment to market your college education professionally might be a wise decision. We write IT resumes

every day for some of the fastest movers in the IT industries. Give us a call if you feel you are ready to advance your high tech career.