

Is Your Executive Resume Too Wordy?

Finding it difficult to sum up your value proposition in a two or three-page [executive resume](#)? In addition to annoying employers, a too-long resume can quickly lose its potency and dilute your brand message—leaving decision-makers confused about why they should hire you for a leadership role.

Here are some tip-offs to a too-wordy resume that fails to distinguish your skills:

- Your bullet-point sentences are longer than 2 or 3 lines, making them nearly impossible to scan quickly
- You've started many phrases or sentences with the same word, which weakens your message
- Your performance results are buried all the way at the end of each sentence, and are therefore hard to find, with minimal brand impact
- You've added too many adjectives and adverbs, with every achievement noted as “outstanding,” “exceptional,” and worst of all, “successful.” (Employers certainly hope this is the case!)

If any of these apply to your executive resume, it's easy to trim excess words with these three techniques that drive your point home quickly:

1. Skip Verbs For Increased Impact

As a branded marketing document, a leadership resume can use innovative conventions, such as sentence fragments that remove the verbs. Consider this example of a sentence transformation:

Original:

Led large-scale operations restructuring and expansion of call centers and company facilities, resulting in a 63% profit increase in just three years and the region's lowest personnel costs.

New:

63% profit increase in 3 years plus lowest per-employee expenses with enterprise-level operations restructuring and expansion.

Here, the original sentence was condensed 37% – but it still conveys the same meaning. Now, imagine what cutting more than a third of the clutter could do for the clarity of YOUR executive resume!

To use this technique, make list of front-loaded results sentences like these, give this section a name (such as Selected Leadership Results), and then pop it on the front page for maximum exposure.

2. Take Out That Long, Winding Summary Paragraph

There's no need to bore your reader with a look-alike [resume summary](#) or profile that states the obvious, such as:

Dedicated team player with proven leadership, technology utilization, and financial expertise. Skilled in completing projects and communicating at all corporate levels, with excellent team-building and cross-functional collaboration skills.

Don't waste this key area of resume real estate with a description that fails to tell a story. Instead, cut down the volume of words while giving a snapshot of brand value that pulls in some achievement metrics.

Here's an example culled from a leadership resume for a candidate moving up the ladder to a CTO role:

VP Technology attaining 99% over-goal performance by exceeding SLA requirements through strategic planning, cost containment, and contract negotiations.

Note the metrics and specific job title blended into the summary statement – with a message that promises value and performance.

3. Learn To Write A Branding Headline

A trade secret among professional and executive resume writers, the headline is actually a tagline that allows you condense more data into a tight space. The best part? Your [resume](#) can use more than one headline to convey your strongest points.

Here are some examples of headlines that encapsulate value and position job hunters for a specific role:

- Senior pharmaceutical executive behind accelerated, multibillion-dollar product launches
- VP Sales driving global growth for new-media marketing company achieving worldwide recognition
- Investment professional promoting financial health through investment & capital planning

A branding headline can quickly give employers the “big picture” of your achievements, without taking up precious space on your executive resume.

To create this statement, combine the position you seek with a major achievement from your career, showing the results of your work or the approach that you use. In fact, you can lift a success story directly from the body of your leadership resume and summarize it—allowing you to remove extraneous detail from elsewhere in your document.

As you continue to adjust your executive resume and tighten the language, be sure to show it to colleagues and others familiar with your work. You’ll probably find, even with excess words removed, it still conveys your brand message—and faster to boot.