



**A Survival Guide For
Technical and Professional Contractors
In The New Millennium**

**Chapter Five:
Resumes for Contract Workers**

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Published by
P.A.C.E.

Professional Association of Contract Employees
<http://www.pacepros.com>

The Contract Employee's Handbook is online at
<http://www.cehandbook.com>

Chapter 5:

Resumes for Contract Workers

Two Types of Resumes

Resumes come in two flavors:

- Chronological
- Functional

Chronological Resumes

Another name for chronological resume is *curriculum vitae*, which means “course of (one's) life” in Latin. This is the traditional format used by academic and professional job seekers. It is the type of resume you learned to write in school. It is used by full-time job seekers.

A chronological resume lists work experience and education in chronological order from most recent to least recent. Consequently, the dominant feature of a chronological resume is a succession of *dates*.

Unfortunately, dates on your resume do not indicate how well qualified you are for a given job. Dates only convey information that is irrelevant, inappropriate, private, and potentially harmful to your career.

For example, dates on a resume invite age discrimination. A chronological resume tells the reader *how old you are*. After all, didn't you graduate from high school in 1975 at the age of 18? Let's see, the year is 2001, so you must be [compute, compute] 44 years old. The important information is that you graduated with this or that degree or certification. *When* you graduated is irrelevant.

Consider also the issue of your stability. A chronological resume tells the reader that you are either a “lifer” or a job hopper, which is a no win situation either way you look at it. Chronological resumes also draw attention to gaps in your work history, and they further invite inappropriate prying into your personal history.

“Tsk, tsk, Ms Jones, I notice a gap between May 17th and September 23rd, 1978. Tell me, what *were* you doing between those dates? Rehab? Jail? Nervous breakdown? Childbirth? Why *couldn't* you find work? You *are* stable, aren't you?”

Naturally, companies want to hire employees who will stick around for a while. But who sticks around any more? All workers nowadays, including corporate CEOs, are day trading their careers. In this era of pervasive downsizing, mergers, and failed start-ups, I should be more concerned with *the company's* stability, and *the company's commitment to me*. Besides, contractors are expected to job hop, it's what we do for a living.

Hiring authorities look for the perfect fit when they hire a full-time employee, and they feel entitled to look for any indication that you are less than a perfect fit. But, what exactly *is* a perfect fit anyway. And what *is* the significance of a six-month gap in a resume that spans 25 years of employment compared with the resume of a younger person with no gaps and only five years of employment?

I suppose a chronological resume might be suitable for a needy, orphaned job seeker who wants to be adopted into someone's corporate family. But technical and professional contractors are decidedly *not* orphaned job seekers. They are independent consultants who offer their specific skills and experience to needy clients.

Chronological resumes are simply the wrong format for marketing your skills and experience to prospective client companies. The correct format is the functional resume.

Functional Resumes

Jobs are becoming project-based and skills-based because companies are becoming project-based and skills-based. Workplace hierarchies are flattening, and we are moving from vertically organized workplaces to networked workplaces.

Employees are day trading their careers to the extent that few high tech employees expect to remain at their current job for more than a couple years.

Jobs are becoming contingent. That is, workers will be needed only for the duration of a given project. Increasingly, companies are viewing all employees, both salaried and hourly-paid, as contingent workers.

By some accounts, fully 40% of the workers in Silicon Valley are already contingent. Microsoft reports that one-third of its workers are temps. A recent report estimates that by the year 2008 40% of all workers in the United States will be contingent, and 70% of high tech workers will be contingent.

The “perfect fit” is becoming irrelevant along with the chronological resume. Instead, managers in today's talent-starved companies are asking just two questions: “What can you do?” and “How well can you do it?”

These questions are answered by the functional resume.

Think “Yellow Page Ad”

Open the yellow pages of your local phone book and flip to “Attorneys”. Notice the abundance of full page ads. I’ll wager you see bold headers, lots of bulleted keywords, very little descriptive text, and no dates. Contact information is posted prominently, and for good reason. These ads are designed to grab your attention and *make you call that phone number*.

Now turn to the section on “Plumbing”: Same thing. Turn to “Electricians”: Same thing. “Physicians”: Ditto. Turn to “Employment Agencies”. There also, you will see bold

headers, bulleted keywords, little descriptive text, and no dates. The same theme is repeated over and over throughout the yellow pages in every full-page, display ad.

These ads demand attention. And we know that they work because if they didn't work professionals would not spend thousands of dollars to place them in the yellow pages.

Don't misunderstand. I am not advocating that you buy an expensive yellow page ad. What I *am* recommending is that you make your resume *look* like one.

Designing a Functional Resume

A functional resume answers these questions:

- Who am I?
- Where am I?
- What do I do?
- How well do I do it?

Content that does not answer one of these questions should be omitted.

The P.A.C.E. Functional Resume

P.A.C.E., Professional Association of Contract Employees, <http://www.pacepros.com>, offers an umbrella service to self-reliant contractors who are willing and able to locate contract assignments on their own, without the assistance of predatory recruiting firms. P.A.C.E. encourages its contractors to use the resume format described in this section when marketing their services to prospective clients. For this reason, I will call it the "P.A.C.E. Functional Resume."

Follow the simple guidelines for the P.A.C.E. Functional Resume and you will create a powerful marketing tool that will have potential clients begging for interviews.

These guidelines are not the law, and I don't expect you to follow them to the letter. After all, every situation is different, and you will adapt your functional resume to suit your particular set of circumstances.

The P.A.C.E. functional resume has the following sections:

- Your Name and Skillset Title
- Copyright Notice
- Compliance Notice
- Personal Contact Information
- Summary of Experience
- Skills and Tools
- Selected Project Titles
- Project Summaries
- Education, Training, and Certifications
- References and Supporting Materials Notice
- About My Relationship With P.A.C.E.
- Contact P.A.C.E.

Your Name

Place your full name prominently at the very top, centered and in large type.

Skillset Title

Place your skillset title directly under your name, centered, and in large type.

The skillset title on your resume must accurately convey what you do, and accurately describe the work you are seeking. If you are responding to a specific job posting, then the skillset title on your resume *must be identical* to the job title on the job posting.

You may list additional skillset titles and descriptive phrases so long as they relate to and refine the main skillset title. For example:

Project Manager, Software Product Rollout

or

Documentation Specialist, Online Content Developer,
B2B Applications

or

QA Project Leader, Requirements Designer, Business
Process Re-engineering.

Do Not Use An Objective

Chronological resumes often contain an objective in addition to a job title. Objectives say nothing about what you do and how well you do it. They are *personal* statements, and they have no place in a professional marketing tool. DO NOT USE AN OBJECTIVE. Objectives are unprofessional. They project the image of an obsequious (i.e., subservient) job applicant. You are not a job applicant. You are a contract professional, and your resume is advertising your consulting services.

Copyright Notice

P.A.C.E. recommends that contractors place the following statement at the very top of their resume.

Copyright 2000 John Q. Contractor. All rights reserved.

This document is expressly NOT in the public domain and remains the sole property of the copyright owner. Distribution or modification of this document without the knowledge, review, and express permission of the copyright owner is strictly prohibited.

This copyright notice will not offend prospective clients, but it will serve notice to contractor recruiting firms that they may not misuse your resume.

Your resume should never be modified or distributed without your knowledge, review, and express permission. The integrity of your resume is protected by federal copyright laws, and your resume remains your property even after you send it off to a client or to a recruiting firm,

or when you post it to an electronic database, personal web page, or other public venue. Your resume may be public, but it is expressly *not* in the public domain.

I mention this because many recruiting firms will think nothing of reworking your resume and misrepresenting your skills to prospective clients. Others will broadcast (spam) your resume under their letterhead to every client in their database, or worse yet, sell your resume to advertising agencies and to manufacturers of CD resume listings.

No one should be allowed to distribute your resume to potential end users or to other brokers, or post your resume to an electronic venue, or sell your resume to a third party without your express, prior approval. Unauthorized distribution of your resume could result in multiple submissions to the same client, resulting in your being removed from consideration for a qualified assignment.

A copyright notice will help you retain control over the content and distribution of your resume.

Compliance Notice

Many companies are wary of hiring self-employed contract workers, especially when those contractors will be working side by side with the company's regular employees. Companies want assurance that they will not be subject to IRS reclassification or to other risks associated with hiring individual contractors.

Place the following statement immediately after the copyright notice. It assures employers that you do not want to do business with outside recruiting firms, and that you are a fully IRS-compliant contractor.

COMPANIES ONLY. ABSOLUTELY NO OUTSIDE RECRUITERS.

My Employer of Record for W-2 Tax Status is P.A.C.E.,
Professional Association of Contract Employees.
<http://www.pacepros.com>

This message should dissuade (most) outside recruiters from contacting you. At the same time the statement conveys that you have W-2 tax status, which should make your resume more attractive to prospective clients.

[**Author's note:** I listed P.A.C.E. in this example because I personally *like* P.A.C.E., not only because P.A.C.E. sponsors The Contract Employee's Handbook, but because P.A.C.E. is the *only* umbrella service I know of that doesn't actively market it's services to contractor recruiting firms. There is no reason why you could not list a different umbrella service or pass-through agency as your employer of record.]

You will use a different message if you qualify as an IRS-compliant independent contractor on your own. That is to say, you operate as an outside vendor with all the accoutrements of a true business, namely:

- Your business entity is that of a corporation or limited liability company – *not* a sole proprietorship.
- Your business has a separate Federal Identification Number – *not* your Social Security Number.
- Your business has a valid business license.
- Your business has a valid fictitious name registration (DBA).
- Your business carries general liability insurance.
- Your business carries errors and omissions insurance (if required by your profession).
- Your business has multiple clients in the course of a year.
- You can supply promotional and marketing materials for your business.

If you qualify on your own as an IRS-compliant independent contractor then your compliance message should look something like this:

COMPANIES ONLY. ABSOLUTELY NO OUTSIDE RECRUITERS.

IRS-compliant independent contractor, FIN# 12-3456789. Proof available on request of business license, DBA registration, general liability insurance, errors and omissions insurance, multiple clients, and promotional materials. http://www.my_company_url.com

Personal Contact Information

At the minimum, include your full name and a personal, professional sounding, e-mail address. Mailing address and phone number are optional. Include your personal Web page, containing your online resume and supporting information, provided the content is strictly business and professional in appearance. For example:

John Q. Contractor
1234 Any Street (or P. O. Box 5678)
Any City, XX, 12345
999-555-1212
johnqcontractor@domain.com
www.imacontractguru.com

Summary of Experience

I recommend that you compose three “nested” statements that explain what you do. They are a seven-second intro, a 30-second sales pitch, and a three-minute presentation.

The seven-second intro expresses in plain English how you help your clients. Use it whenever possible during casual introductions over a handshake. It also works well during marketing calls to HR departments and client contacts. In most cases your seven-second intro is all the time you have to “hook” your quarry and grab their interest.

Begin your seven-second intro with the phrase “I help my clients...” Finish the intro by explaining in simple terms how you help clients save money, solve specific problems, and otherwise ease their pain. Your seven-second intro is where you *establish your value* to the client.

The second statement is a 30-second sales pitch. It starts with your seven-second intro, and then adds a 23-second explanation of the value you bring to each client. This

statement should be expressed in plain English, and be so simple to understand that even your grandmother would appreciate what you do if you read it to her. Your 30-second sales pitch is what you use in telephone calls and casual conversation when the other party asks for more information.

The third statement lasts three minutes. It expands on the second statement by adding two-and-a-half-minutes of detail. Give your three-minute presentation during job interviews and when explaining your work to knowledgeable colleagues and prospective clients. Your three-minute presentation recaps selected projects, emphasizing how your contract services helped former clients (and employers) meet project goals.

Use your 30-second sales pitch as the Summary of Experience in your P.A.C.E. functional resume.

Read your Summary of Experience to one or more non-technical friends. Make sure that they understand and appreciate what you do based entirely on the 30-second sales pitch in your Summary of Experience.

Avoid specialized jargon. Your resume will be read by non-technical staff administrators and HR clerks. For this reason alone you must *keep it simple*.

Skills and Tools

Your resume may be scanned by an automated system or by the eyes of a real human being. Either way, you will have fewer than five seconds to demonstrate that you do what the client wants done so that they will want to read more.

Sentences and paragraphs do a lousy job of quickly and efficiently conveying important information. Facts are easily lost in a jumble of adjectives, action verbs and various parts of speech. Dyslexia rules when the reader is in a hurry.

The solution: Use lists of comma-delimited keywords organized in different categories with bold headings like **HARDWARE, TOOLS, DATABASES, SOFTWARE, OPERATING SYSTEMS, NETWORKING**, etc. Use categories that are appropriate for your profession and skill set.

For example, the category for programming languages might look like this:

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES:

C++, Visual C++, COM, DCOM, Visual Basic 6.0, VBScript, PL, SQL, Java, Javascript, HTML

Do not use “/” to combine related terms (as in “C/C++” or “Programmer/Developer”), or in any way list terms so that they may be confusing to an automatic resume scanner or dyslexic HR staffer.

Selected Project Titles

A list of selected project titles lets the reader quickly scan your capabilities.

Think of every project you ever did, both as a full-time salaried employee and as a contract worker. Give each project a descriptive title and list the titles as bullets in descending order of relevance to the project you are applying for. Avoid undue repetition, and omit minor projects and irrelevant projects.

Project Summaries

This section lets the reader read more about the specific projects you have worked on. Use a format similar to this for each project summary:

PROJECT: Title of Project

ROLE: Your Functional Role

INDUSTRY: Vertical Industry

- First bulleted item: Tasks performed and benefit to client.

- Second bulleted item: Tasks performed and benefit to client.

- Third bulleted item: Tasks performed and benefit to client.

- Etc.

A bulleted format is easier to read, and it makes your individual talents stand out. Keep bulleted items to a single sentence. If a sentence runs longer than two lines of text then break it up into shorter bulleted sentences.

Education, Training, and Certifications

In bulleted form list your degrees, and list any training classes and certifications that relate to your skill set. *Leave out all dates.* Dates can only support someone's bias that your experience is either too dated or too recent.

References and Supporting Documentation Notice

In this section simply state:

I will provide references and a portfolio of supporting materials during the interview.

Never include references in the body of your resume, and *never*, give the contact information for your references to an outside recruiter. If you are working with a recruiter or marketing agent explain that you will bring a confidential list of references to the interview for exclusive use by the client. Misuse of reference information by recruiters can ruin the relationship between you and your references.

Here are some of the ways that recruiters routinely misuse reference information:

- Market candidates to references.
- Solicit job orders from references.
- Solicit from references the names of co-workers, colleagues, and contractors.
- Solicit business leads from references.
- Attempt to recruit references.
- Transfer or copy reference information to a location outside your own file.
- Make reference information available to others not specifically engaged in placing you with an end user.

About My Relationship With P.A.C.E.

The following brief statement explains in clear language how P.A.C.E. benefits the client company, and why it is in the client's best interest to accept P.A.C.E. as an approved vendor or subcontractor.

P.A.C.E., www.pacepros.com, mitigates the co-employment risks associated with hiring contract workers throughout the United States. P.A.C.E. employs me and issues IRS Form W-2. P.A.C.E. withholds and pays all applicable payroll taxes and income taxes. P.A.C.E. covers me for Workers Compensation and Unemployment Insurance, plus General Liability Insurance and Errors & Omissions Insurance up to \$5 million aggregate. P.A.C.E. provides continuity of employment, continuity of health insurance, and the best retirement plan available to any employee in any company in the United States. I will only provide my consulting services to companies that accept P.A.C.E. as an approved vendor or subcontractor.

Contact P.A.C.E.

Your prospective client may want to contact P.A.C.E. to learn more about the services provided by your employer of record. Include the following contact information.

P.A.C.E. - Professional Association of Contract Employees
367 Civic Drive, Suite 15
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
(925) 680-0200
admin@pacepros.com
www.pacepros.com

General Considerations

As a rule, use lots of "white space" for easy reading, and keep sentences short and sweet. Except for the Summary of Experience replace all paragraphs with bulleted or comma delimited lists.

Keep the content sharply focused on your skills, and leave out such extraneous information as hobbies, personal goals, and career objectives. Keep in mind that your resume is *not* about you, it is about *your skill set*.

In general, do not send your resume as an e-mail attachment. If you do send it as an attachment send it as plain (ASCII) text, and give it a file name like lastname_firstname_resume.txt.

To avoid problems with computer viruses in attachments paste your resume as plain text into the body of an e-mail message.

When registering online with a job board or with a corporate career page paste your *entire* resume into the text box.

If you do mail a hard copy of your resume, do not embellish it with fancy fonts and expensive stationary. Content is *everything*. Do nothing to distract from the *content* of your functional resume.

The P.A.C.E. Functional Resume format will appeal to inexperienced screeners such as HR clerks and administrative assistants who are assigned to weed out resumes that do not fit the job description. It will also appeal to highly technical hiring authorities such as project managers and executive directors.

Companies tend to evaluate all candidates as potential full-time employees. It is your job as a contractor to make sure that companies evaluate you as a hired gun. The P.A.C.E. Functional Resume helps you do just that.

A Final Note About Job Board Postings

As a rule, I do not recommend that you post your resume on an Internet job board. Doing so only invites the attention of predatory recruiters, and it does nothing to promote you and your skills to client companies.

Posting your resume to a job board is like buying a lottery ticket, and the odds of winning are about the same.

Naturally, we all want client companies to call us. Who doesn't want their dream job delivered to them on a silver platter? But I assure you, you will mostly receive calls from irritating recruiters and other low-lives.

Few companies will call you directly. They simply do not have the time to make all those phone calls. That's why clients put up with the high rates charged by agency recruiters. Recruiters don't wait for the client to call them.

Recruiters are so successful because recruiters take the initiative to call the client first. I suggest that you beat the recruiters at their own game. *You* contact the client first.

Imagine that you are a pinto bean in a bowl filled to the brim with other pinto beans. Question: *What are your chances of being picked out by someone who is looking for a pinto bean?* Answer: *Not very good.*

Now, imagine that you are a Mexican jumping bean actively hopping again and again above the pile of passive, do-nothing pinto beans. Do you think that your chances of being picked out of the crowd might be a little better? You betcha!

It makes little sense to pour your resume into a resume bank filled to the brim with thousands of other resumes that look just like yours. If you want to increase your chances of being selected you have to become a Mexican jumping bean. You have to actively market yourself *directly* to prospective clients.

Chances are, human nature being the way it is, if you are looking for your next contract assignment you are already out of work. That means that you have eight hours a day to actively market yourself to client companies.

Here is what to do with your time. Instead of posting your resume to the job boards use the Internet to locate full-time and contract jobs posted directly by client companies. Whenever possible screen out listings by recruiting firms.

Post your P.A.C.E. Functional Resume directly to the company. Two days later send another e-mail to the same e-mail address inquiring about the status of your resume, and requesting an interview. Two days later, follow up with a telephone call, also inquiring about the status of your resume, and requesting an interview.

This approach will require many iterations, but you only need one successful hit. In the meantime you will have created an enormous file of companies and company contacts that may need your services in the future.

Follow this plan and you will have less down time, and you will earn much more than if you passively waited for someone to call you. As an additional bonus, you will have a greater variety of projects to choose from. Your work will be more profitable *and* more fun.

Sample P.A.C.E. Functional Resume

On the following page is a Sample P.A.C.E. Functional Resume based on the recommendations in this chapter of The Contract Employee's Handbook. Use this sample resume as a template when building your own resume.

Insert your own name in the Copyright notice. Otherwise, leave the "Copyright" and "Companies Only" notices as they are. Also, leave the information about P.A.C.E. at the end of the resume as it is in the template.

Click this link to download a Word document containing the Sample P.A.C.E. Functional Resume: http://www.cehandbook.com/cehandbook/docs/cehandbook_resume_template.doc

* * * * *

John Q. Contractor
Your Skillset Title

Copyright 2001 John Q. Contractor. All rights reserved.

This document is expressly NOT in the public domain and remains the sole property of the copyright owner. Distribution or modification of this document without the knowledge, review, and express permission of the copyright owner is strictly prohibited.

COMPANIES ONLY. ABSOLUTELY NO THIRD-PARTY RECRUITERS.

My Employer of Record while on contract assignments is P.A.C.E., Professional Association of Contract Employees, www.pacepros.com

CONTACT INFORMATION

John Q. Contractor
1234 Any Street (or P. O. Box 5678)
Any City, XX, 12345
999-555-1212
johnqcontractor@domain.com
www.imacontractguru.com

SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE

[This is essentially a 30-second sales pitch. It starts with a seven-second intro. Begin your seven-second intro with the phrase "I help my clients..." Finish the intro by explaining in simple terms how you help clients save money, solve specific problems, and otherwise ease their pain. Your seven-second intro is where you establish your value to the client.

Next, add a 23-second explanation of the value you bring to each client. This statement should be expressed in plain English, and be so simple to understand that even your

grandmother would appreciate what you do if you read it to her. Your 30-second sales pitch is what you use in telephone calls and casual conversation when the other party asks for more information.]

SKILLS AND TOOLS

SKILLSET CATEGORY

Comma, delimited, list, of, items or skills

ANOTHER SKILLSET CATEGORY

Comma, delimited, list, of, items or skills

ANOTHER SKILLSET CATEGORY

Comma, delimited, list, of, items

Etc., Etc.

Comma, delimited, list, of, items

SELECTED PROJECT TITLES

- Most Relevant Project Title
- Second Most Relevant Project Title
- Third Most Relevant Project Title
- Etc., Etc.

PROJECT SUMMARIES

PROJECT: Most Relevant Project to Contract Assignment

ROLE: Your Functional Role or Skillset Title

INDUSTRY: Vertical Industry or Type of Business

Designed and led migration from etc., etc.

- Installed and supported etc., etc.
- Responsible for day-to-day support of etc., etc.
- Performed evaluations and made recommendations for etc., etc.

- Implemented etc., etc.

PROJECT: Second Most Relevant Project

ROLE: Your Functional Role or Skillset Title

INDUSTRY: Vertical Industry or Type of Business

- What you did and how it helped the company.
- What you did and how it helped the company.
- What you did and how it helped the company.
- Etc.

PROJECT: Third Most Relevant Project

ROLE: Your Functional Role or Skillset Title

INDUSTRY: Vertical Industry or Type of Business

- What you did and how it helped the company.
- What you did and how it helped the company.
- What you did and how it helped the company.
- Etc.

PROJECT: Etc., Etc.

ROLE: Your Functional Role

INDUSTRY: Vertical Industry or Type of Business

- What you did and how it helped the company.
- What you did and how it helped the company.
- What you did and how it helped the company.
- Etc.

EDUCATION

Anytown State University

B.S. History with minors in Computer Science and Mass Communications

Additional Trade School, College, or University
Degree. Subject [Do not give date]

TRAINING

- This and That Instructional Techniques
- One or Another Core Technologies
- ABC System Administration
- XYZ Accelerated Training
- Etc.

CERTIFICATIONS

- Name of Certification
- Name of Certification
- Name of Certification
- Name of Certification
- Etc.

REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS

I will provide references and a portfolio of supporting materials during the interview.

ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP WITH P.A.C.E.

P.A.C.E., www.pacepros.com, mitigates the co-employment risks associated with hiring contract workers throughout the United States. P.A.C.E. employs me and issues IRS Form W-2. P.A.C.E. withholds and pays all applicable payroll taxes and income taxes. P.A.C.E. covers me for Workers Compensation and Unemployment Insurance, plus General Liability Insurance and Errors & Omissions Insurance up to \$5 million aggregate. P.A.C.E. provides continuity of employment, continuity of health insurance,

and the best retirement plan available to any employee in any company in the United States. I will only provide my consulting services to companies that accept P.A.C.E. as an approved vendor or subcontractor.

CONTACT P.A.C.E.

P.A.C.E. – Professional Association of Contract Employees
367 Civic Drive, Suite 15
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
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admin@pacepros.com
www.pacepros.com