

By Erik Eckel

Most everyone's skeptical.

Too many organizations—promised the world but ultimately recipients of substandard service, flaky technologies, incompatible systems or worse—have been burnt by IT consultants. Consequently, organizations of all sizes, from small businesses to large enterprises, are suspicious of claims and promises IT consultants make.

As an IT contractor, your best strategy is to let your reputation speak for you. And the best way to communicate your reputation to a prospective new client (other than via testimonials from clients pleased with the service you've already provided) is to let your resume speak for you. How do you create a job-winning IT consultant resume? Here are 10 tips.

1 Be truthful

By now, everyone's heard how George O'Leary lost arguably the most coveted football coaching job in America (at Notre Dame) and how RadioShack (Tandy Corporation) CEO David Edmondson lost his lucrative post: They falsified their resumes.

Padding resumes is a long-practiced art. According to a Society For Human Resource Management [article](#), 30 percent of all job applicants misrepresent themselves on their resumes. Worse, the same article revealed that an ADP Payroll study from 2.6 million background checks found 44 percent of applicants flat out lied about their work experience, 41 percent listed false education histories, and 23 percent faked credentials or licenses.

Let those folks work themselves out of the gene pool. Stick to listing only true statements on your resume. There's no better way to distinguish yourself and begin building a foundation of excellence. If you can't prove it, don't list it.

2 Be concise

Resumes must be short to be effective. Don't drone on needlessly. Get in and get out. List work and education experiences, highlight the role you played in specific accomplishments, record accreditations and awards... and be done with it.

As career trainer Richard S. Reed wrote in his [do's and don'ts for consultant resumes](#) on TechRepublic, remember that "Resume means summary—so keep it brief." As Reed recommends, limit your resume to two pages or less. The likelihood of a longer document being reviewed in its entirety is minimal, anyway.

3 Be accurate

Review your resume and verify that work dates, titles, responsibilities, addresses, and other information are all correct. It's easy to miss a start date by a month or list an address incorrectly, but if a prospective client decides to follow up on your resume (an ever-increasing trend following those high-profile resume scandals), even minor inaccuracies will reflect poorly on you.

When polishing your resume, be sure to confirm company addresses haven't changed. Do the same with phone numbers. And if you list descriptive information for an employer or past client (third-largest shoe manufacturer, leading sunglasses distributor, Fortune 100 company), make sure those statements are still true (and that the leading sunglasses distributor you worked for hasn't gone bankrupt, for example). Leaving outdated information on your resume only leads to embarrassment.

4 Better your highlight accomplishments

Many technology professionals struggle to effectively highlight accomplishments on their resumes. It's easy to focus on the challenging tasks you've completed. But you must communicate more than just the fact that you completed a project.

For example, you might list something like this: "Completed network overhaul," "Installed new e-mail platform," or "Deployed comprehensive mobile phone systems." While such line-item mentions are accomplishments, they fail to capture the accomplishment's full value. Stating the following is much more illuminating: "Completed network overhaul ahead of schedule and under budget," "Installed new e-mail platform that simplified administration and eliminated third-party service provider dependence," or "Deployed comprehensive mobile phone system that improved field communication."

5 Tie successes to business objectives

When highlighting accomplishments, it's best to go one step further and tie project successes directly to business objectives. This is where an IT consultant's work assumes monetary value (or payback on the original investment). Don't feel a need to exaggerate; instead, confirm backup documentation exists proving statements you make.

Here's how it should work. Instead of just saying you installed a new e-mail platform that simplified administration, provide additional details: "Installed a new e-mail platform that simplified administration and saved the IT department \$25,000 annually." Or "Deployed a comprehensive mobile phone system that improved field communication resulting in sales performance increases of 12 percent."

The focus should be on capturing something measurable (cost savings, sales performance, labor reduction, average purchase volume, response rates, etc.). In keeping with the other tenets listed earlier, be sure the statements you list are not claims but facts that are easily supported.

6 Seek high profile clients

When most readers view this recommendation, they think of prestige or name dropping. That's a mistake.

IT consultants should consider seeking a few high profile clients, but not to feed their egos. Instead of chasing a few well-known clients for their wow or coolness factor, providing technology services to a few well-known and well-respected organizations can speak volumes to your reputation. While a prospective client may not be familiar with you or your work, knowing that the chamber of commerce, a local famous manufacturer, or a prominent nonprofit charity entrusts its IT systems to you or your firm will go a long way in helping win the client's confidence.

Such high profile clients need not be massive organizations or even for-profit companies. The goal is to help prospective clients feel more comfortable working with you when they don't know you. Thus, a small local bakery known throughout the region for pride and quality in its products works wonders when listed as a reference on your resume.

7 Explain awards

Often, it's tempting to just list awards within a short accolades section. When I've had to fill an open position in the past, while reviewing numerous resumes listing various awards, I found myself wondering what skills, expertise, or accomplishment the award actually recognized.

Don't make that mistake on your IT consulting resume. Seek opportunities to maximize an award's impact. For example, don't just say you won the chamber of commerce's entrepreneur award. Briefly describe why you won the award. Focus on the qualities that the award celebrated (exceptional service, attention to detail, lowered client costs, reduced production cycles, etc.).

8 Don't forget certifications/accreditations

In my personal and professional experience as both a technology author and small business technology consultant, I've found that IT professionals are placing less emphasis on certification and industry accreditation. But that's no reason to omit these elements from a consulting resume.

If you have industry certification, security clearances, vendor accreditation, or licenses, list them. Prospective clients can make better informed decisions when they know more about your professional constitution—and you better believe competitors will be listing such traits.

9 Target resumes by market

Unfortunately, when it comes to resumes, one size doesn't fit all. Don't expect to create a single resume that works equally well for medical providers and for financial consultants. Tailor your resume to target the prospective client's needs and business objectives.

You do this by listing accomplishments and tying them to business goals, targeting results that will prove timely and relevant to the prospect client.

Unsure what challenges a prospective client faces? Uncertain how a potential customer might measure technology success or weigh IT investments? No problem. Use the Internet and navigate to the professional association and trade magazine Web sites that service those vertical markets. You'll quickly learn just how those industries value and measure technology success.

10 Keep it current

Possibly the easiest mistake to make on any resume is to let it become dated. As soon as you complete work on your IT consultant resume, the file begins to date itself. As I said earlier, it's critical to ensure that company information remains current. More important, as your title, professional role, work responsibilities, and other details change, so should your resume.

Maintaining a resume, however, isn't at the top of everyone's list. This is especially true among IT consultants, who must regularly juggle not only the myriad aspects of running their own businesses but also the responsibility of maintaining numerous client's systems, networks, and data.

Make sure your resume remains accurate. Fall back to an old school method. Create a Task or Calendar reminder within Outlook and set it to remind you once a quarter that it's time to review your resume for accuracy.

Additional resources

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- [10 signs that you aren't cut out to be an IT consultant](#)
- [10 things you should know about starting an IT consulting business](#)

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