



Fun Resume Tips For Military Spouses

My friends came over for the weekend and brought two small gifts for my kids. One gift was a small stuffed animal and a book, the other a small puzzle; but what stood out was the presentation! Clear cellophane wrap around the book and beautifully tied raw hide ribbons tied in a bow that was so beautiful I didn't even want to open it, or at least I wanted to somehow save it for re-gifting purposes. Presentation does make a difference! So I keep this in mind when I am looking at clients resumes. I like a resume printed on a good quality printer with no smudging, thick ecru paper, and if you are delivering it via email no italics and I like a little white space. If you are delivering the resume in person to a company or passing it along at a networking event make sure you have a fresh manicure and a good haircut to boot. Clients often want to know a savvy way of combining their chaotic work history and how to package the gifts they have obtained throughout their military lifestyle. Should they go for "spouse friendly employers" or hide the fact that they are a spouse on the run; they remember the hiring managers making comments on why they should or should not hire a candidate. Take these tips into consideration as you go after the job of your dreams and remember that the law of attraction also applies to resumes, so regardless of my tips, if you love your resume others may love it as well!

1. Looks matter. First impressions count so make your resume pretty! Consider limiting any bold or italic font as it often looks messy if the resume is scanned; better yet, try creating a clean PDF version of your resume as well so that it can be submitted to jobs electronically and not lose its profes-

sional appearance. Hiring managers are turned off by hard to pronounce names so if you have a difficult name put a nickname in parenthesis next to it for the job hunt—they can learn how to pronounce Vandana after you are hired. If you have an equally exquisite email address, consider changing that too. While friends may enjoy sending email to lovemymilitaryman@aol.com consider revamping the email listed on your resume to your initials or your first and last name and the internet provider; it will appear much more professional. You never know if a hiring manager is spying on MySpace or judging your personal address. In addition, make sure your home and cell phone voice mails are short, professional, and clear while you are job hunting.

2. Don't play hard to get: You don't want a potential employer to call your house and be scared off by your sarcastic recording. Bottom line, make sure that you include a correct name, email, and mobile phone number that you can access at all times. Try to send resumes when you will have time to interview as well. If you are working full time, taking night classes, and about to have a baby you may not be free for potential interviews, and if a company calls you to come in and you postpone the date, another candidate may be hired on the spot just because they show up first. Perhaps postponing sending the resume until your summer holiday or three months postpartum will up your chances of being picked.
3. How to make up for lost time: Spouses often struggle with the proverbial gaps in their resume. Stop worrying about it so much and just think of what you did during that time that would still be worth listing. When you have a career gap it is ok to include those part-time extra jobs you took just to earn some money, and remember to word them as professionally as you can and include transferable skills such as customer relations or multitasking so your future employer sees some benefit to the work. You can also fill a gap with any volunteer work or schooling that may have been completed, especially if it is relevant to the job you are after. If you do have a lengthy gap in your resume try filling the gap with a few bullets rather than a lengthy explanation in a cover letter that should be focusing solely on your strengths. If the gap is so big that you can't even fill half a page, then go take some intro to computer classes and volunteer at organizations associated with the type of work you want to do, join some professional organizations or

- attend a conference so you have something current to brag about.
4. **Boldly define benefits:** Job selection experts are not mind readers so don't assume they will understand military-spouse jargon; make sure your resume is clear and to the point. Write the resume with the companies needs in the forefront of your mind rather than highlighting what you are seeking. Resumes are not job descriptions of what you did, but rather a personal press release that displays accomplishments in clear succinct bullets highlighting your strengths, your transferable skills, and past contributions that will cause you to stand out and pique their interest rather than a recap your entire employment history. Companies should be able to quickly see your credentials and spot highlights that make you a good match to their company.
 5. **Size doesn't matter:** While one really good page is better than two so-so pages, don't cutback or start shrinking text to comply. Remember that short and sweet is all you need; and I say go for the trendier "profile" instead of a generic objective (description of the job you are after). The company knows the objective if you are applying for a job and a profile summarizes your selling points. One page resumes are back in style so consider moving some of those accomplishments to the cover letter and pairing down the resume content to look more like a sales brochure than a dissertation. In addition to choosing a clean simple typeface, have your resume professionally edited, and avoid any jargon. Keep in mind that a positive tone and active first-person tense reads more attractively.
 6. **Don't fake it:** Some spouses hire a fancy resume writer that rewords what they have done in old jobs to percentages and dollar signs of what they have accomplished, but then get stumped during interviews when they are quizzed on their own resume. Don't list that you are an expert at databases if you have never worked with one. Instead of scattering resume buzzwords and clichés throughout, make the resume authentic. First think of your top strengths and then use a strong verb that describes where you really excel rather than what looks good on paper. Not only will your confidence shine through, but once you are hired for the job it will end up being a much better match than if you exaggerate in your resume and end up being placed in a job that requires the "attention to detail" work that you abhor.
 7. **Peeking isn't cheating:** Go have a coffee at the library or local bookstore and peek at the resume book section. Do an online search, or better yet ask friends who are in good jobs if you can use their resume as an idea template. I am not saying to plagiarize a resume manual word for word, but as you read others' resumes it may "remind you" that you also were awarded something that slipped your mind. It can even be useful to go back to your old employee handbook that describes your past job description to help jog your memory of your skills and successes. As long as your ideas come from enough different sources and really resonate with who you are, it isn't cheating.
 8. **Tell your friends to brag:** As with everything else in military life, it never hurts to be overprepared. When you go to an interview bring along a few extra copies of your resume in case you need to pass one or more on for a second interview—you never know. If you wrote "references available upon request" make sure that you actually have references and have a pre-typed one pager of these references and their contact information ready and on hand. Don't forget to let folks know you have used them as a reference so they don't blow your cover and say "Sara who" when a future employer actually calls.
 9. **Don't assume:** Don't assume the hiring manager knows how you are connected. If you know someone in the organization well, mention your "contact" in the cover letter's first paragraph. Some spouses assume that an employer knows they are proficient at the computer or that they have references available upon request. It never hurts to include all relevant job skills. Another assumption people make is that the human resource professional reviewing your resume knows all the jargon associated with each job. Stay away from abbreviations and jargon no matter how common you think the word is.
 10. **Show off your stuff:** A beautiful resume that stays on your computer isn't going to get you that job. Contact all the military-spouse job resources and post your polished resume. In addition, print some extra copies and bring them with you so as you network you can pass them out. Try traditional job-search sites as well and don't be afraid to put yourself out there. You have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find your prince, and the same goes for job hunting. Buy some nice folders and place a few resumes in them to drop off at your idea organiza-

tions. If an organization isn't hiring, ask them if they can keep your resume on file just in case something opens up.

Call to action:

- Write down everything you have done in the past with regards to your work history from your first job to now. Include relevant volunteer work, seminars, and training you have received, etc. and next to each item list the skills you acquired such as answered a 5 line phone, presented to a group of 50, brought in X number of dollars in revenue, etc.
- Create a skeleton resume with the main content you want to share with potential employers, then save this as "resume skeleton" on your computer;

and then you may want to create two different resumes for the two directions you are headed. For example, one resume may include all your military volunteer work and be terrific for applying for that perfect position with a spouse friendly employer, and the other resume may look more corporate and include only your work history, a P.O. box, and that "great" corporate contact in the cover letter.

Have a mentor (outside the military) review your resume and give you honest feedback. Consider the resources available to you on base or email me at Krista@militaryspousecoach.com to schedule a quick resume consultation which includes editing and discussing your resume and lots of support; coaching you to take the next step in your career!

Krista Wells is a professional career coach; she ensures that her military spouse clients consistently reap the benefits of her proven expertise in dealing with career and life transitions. Through powerful support and encouragement, her clients achieve greater balance and fulfillment, and embrace military life with passion!

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