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Pack your résumé for success

Catch an employer's eye with dynamic text

By **DEBRA AUERBACH**
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It's not hard to find résumé-writing advice. In fact, there's so much advice available that it can often lead to confusion. Given today's highly competitive job market, having a strong and attention-grabbing résumé is crucial. According to a recent CareerBuilder study, nearly half of human resource managers spend, on average, less than one minute reviewing an application.

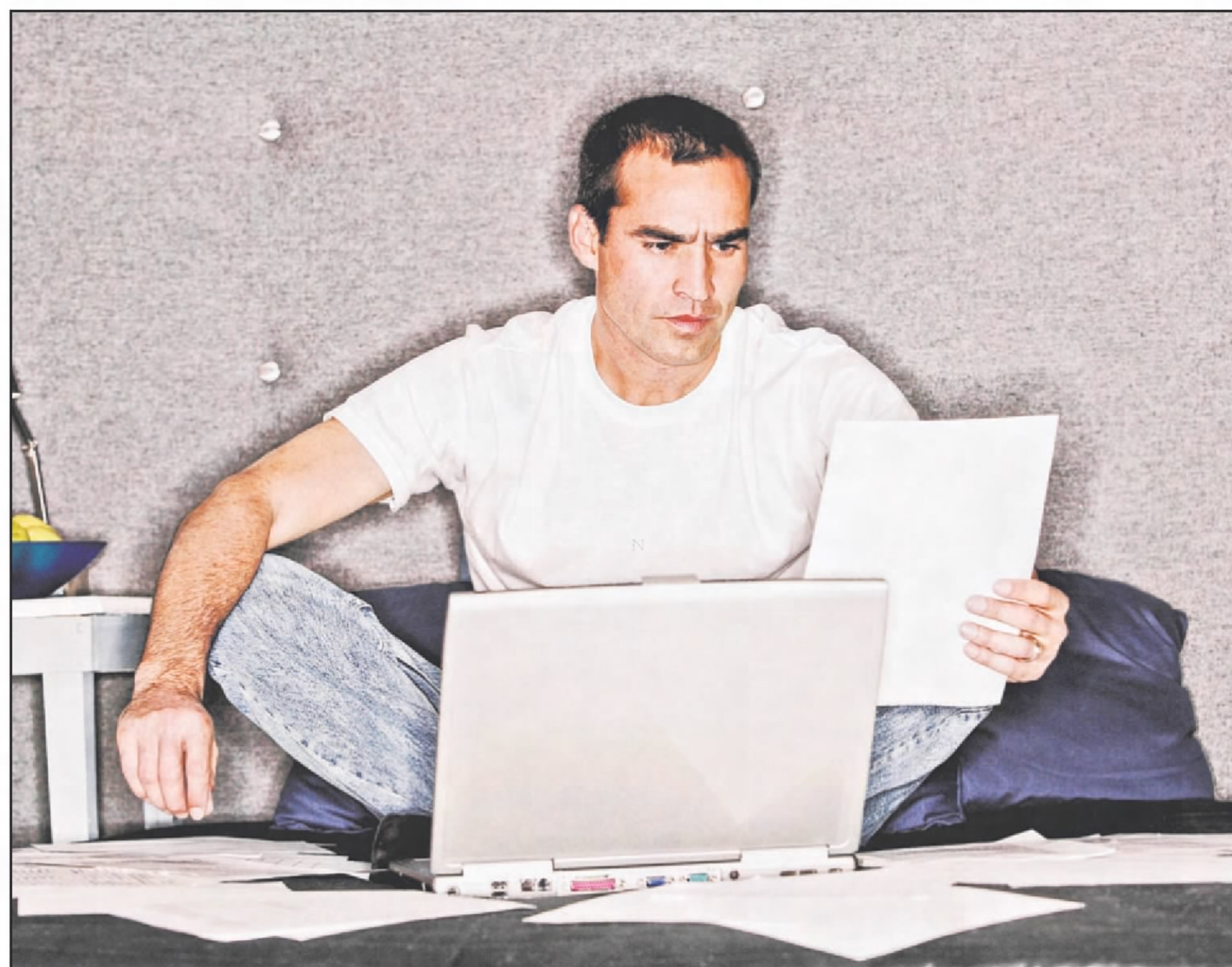
To make résumé-writing less daunting, here are six tips from career coaches, recruiters and professional résumé writers on how to pack your résumé for success.

1. Count on keywords

Many employers use an applicant tracking system, also known as APS, to screen applicants' online résumés. Kelly Donovan, career communications strategist and certified professional résumé writer, says that the software works by scoring each résumé based on keywords. "This could be keywords in the job description that the software selects or keywords that the HR department and hiring manager have identified," Donovan says. "Either way, the keywords in the job description will be your biggest clue as to what keywords might be used for the screening." Donovan's advice is to print the job posting and highlight all nouns and noun phrases that seem important, paying particular attention to proper nouns. These words and phrases should be in your résumé.

2. Move from 'objective' to 'professional summary'

Go back five to 10 years, and most résumés started with a generic job objective, such as, "Journalism major interested in pursuing a public-relations position." In recent years, savvy job seekers have transitioned to



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As you write your resume, focus on the experiences and skills that will immediately grab the attention of potential employers. Many spend less than a minute scanning your resume.

professional summaries instead. "Professional summaries are 'in' and have been for several years now," says Cheryl Palmer, certified career coach and professional résumé writer. "A professional summary highlights a job seeker's best assets and positions that person for the type of job that he or she is seeking." An example of a professional summary would be, "Seven years of professional experience in public relations, with a focus on branding and event management. Responsible for generating new and growing existing client business."

3. Emphasize qualifications and accomplishments

This one may seem obvious, but many job seekers think they're including accomplish-

ments when they're really just listing daily duties. Sure, it's great that you've created new-business plans. But employers want to know what those plans accomplished or if they brought in revenue. "Job candidates should always focus their résumé on their accomplishments," says Kat Krull, associate marketing manager at Resunate. "Using the acronym SAR — Situation, Action, Results — can be helpful. Ask yourself: 'What was the situation, what actions did I take and what was the result?'" Clearly spelling that out will show that you're not only good at taking direction, but that you're also results-driven.

4. Include relevant extracurricular activities

While the majority of your résumé should

focus on professional experience, including hobbies or volunteering positions can help you stand out. Doing so shows that you're well-rounded and gives employers a glimpse into your personality outside of work. It's also another place to showcase your skills and qualifications as they relate to the coveted position. For example, if you're seeking a finance position, you should highlight your role as treasurer for the organization at which you volunteered. This is especially helpful for those new to the workforce who may not have as much professional experience to include.

5. Don't over-pack it with content

"Given limited attention spans and time constraints, the most important thing to remember when developing a résumé is to ensure that it is concise and clear," says Lynda Zugec, managing director at The Workforce Consultants. "Only include information that is necessary to the job, and limit wording so that you come across as succinct and purposeful, not wordy. If your résumé looks crowded and includes unnecessary details, you may lose the attention of the recruiter or employer."

6. Integrate technology

Since most résumés are now submitted online, including links to relevant social-media profiles, personal websites or online portfolios can make your résumé multidimensional. "Doing so provides a one-step-beyond approach to who you are as a candidate and what you can bring to a prospective employer," says Nancy Schuman, staffing and employment professional and chief marketing officer at LLOYD Staffing. Just make sure to clean up your profiles before sharing them, so employers don't have access to anything that might be detrimental to your professional reputation.

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