

Write Great Résumés Faster



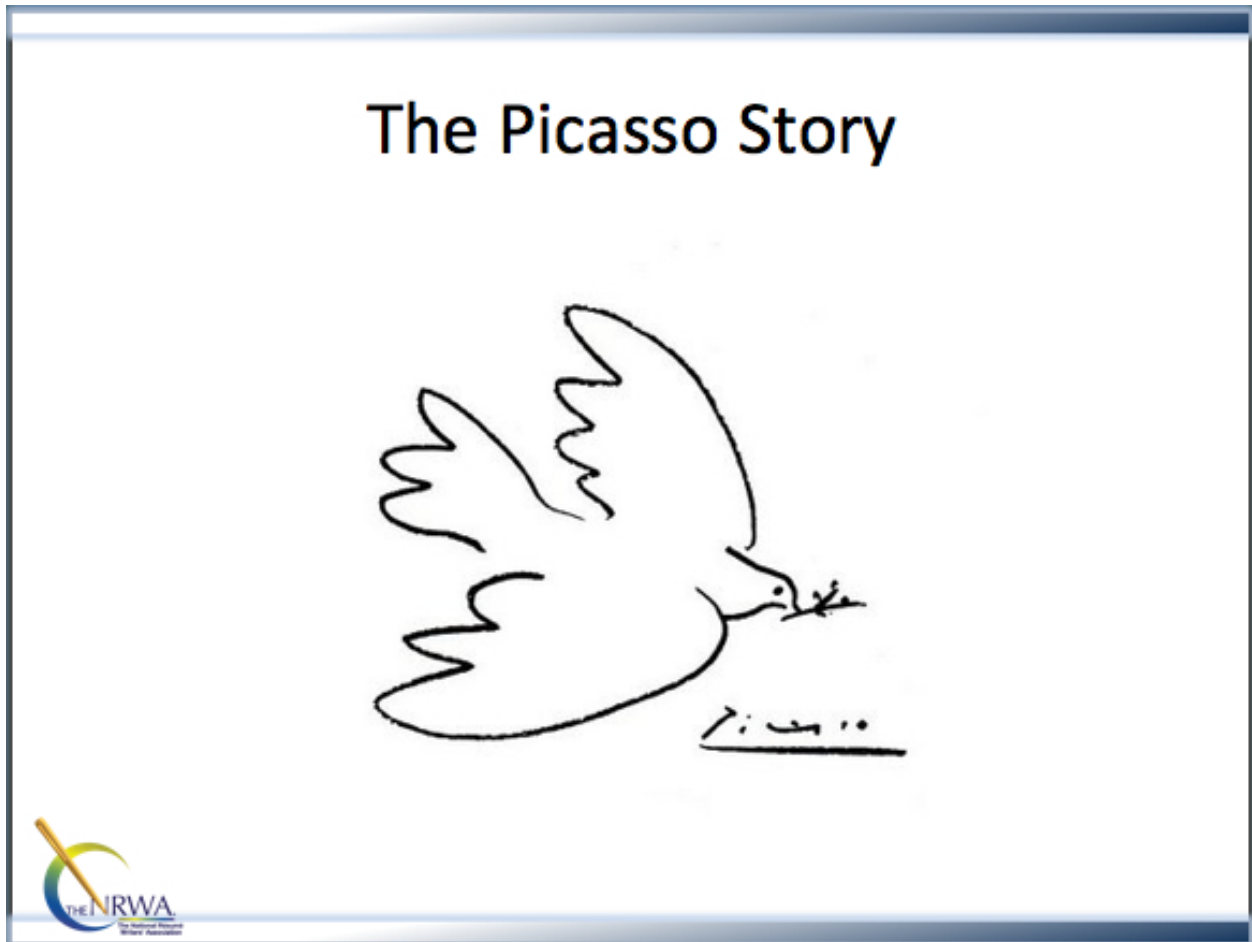
Bridget (Weide) Brooks
Editor, Résumé Writers' Digest
Founder, BeAResumeWriter.com



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**Bridget (Weide) Brooks, CPRW
Résumé Writers' Digest/
BeAResumeWriter.com
bb@bearesumewriter.com**

HANDOUTS & RESOURCE GUIDE



TWO GOALS:

- Write better résumés
- Write them a little more quickly

PART 1: THE PRE-WRITING PROCESS – PREPARE YOURSELF; PREPARE YOUR CLIENTS

- **Get In The Flow**

Definition of “Flow”

The biggest challenge when you’re trying to write well/write fast:

- **What Gets Measured, Gets Done**

Track how long it takes you to write your next few résumés

- **The “Write Faster Mentality”**

Define a specific amount of time you’ll spend writing the résumé

Have a clear job target for the client (top of the page)

Collect the right information

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Collecting Information About the Client’s Job Target/Desired Job

These are questions recommended to clarify the client’s job objective:

- Describe your ideal employer — size, industry, culture, location, structure (public, private, family-owned, franchise, nonprofit)
- Is there a specific job you’re interested in applying for? (Ask for the job posting, or have them tell you what they know about the position.)
- What job titles are you targeting? (Please be specific regarding responsibilities, level, functional role, industry, location, compensation, and any environmental factors that are important to you.)
- What kind of companies are you interested in working for?
- What would you like to do next?
- If you could customize your career and create your own job, what skills would you use, and how would you apply them?
- What do you want to be “when you grow up?”

Questions to Capture the Essence of the Client’s Current Job

If your client’s current job is relevant to his or her target position, spend some time identifying the key areas of expertise in the job he or she holds now.

- What is the most important part of your current job?
- Can you describe a typical day, along with the standard duties/responsibilities that may cross your path?
- What do you like — and dislike — about your current job?
- How does your current job fit within the context of the organization? Who do you work with? What other areas do you support? What interaction do you have with customers?

Questions to Elicit Information About Accomplishments

Accomplishments are the most important part of the résumé. Gathering relevant, quantifiable accomplishments can be a challenge.

- What does someone with your job need to do and accomplish in order to be considered a success?
- How would I know that you’re doing your job well?

- What sets you apart from other candidates for this job? Why are you better than average?
- What have you achieved in your job — have you saved your employer any money or any other quantifiable measure (helped the company make money, become more efficient, improve safety, improve customer service, etc.)?
- What do you do for a company that someone else did not, or would not, do?
- Have you received any honors, awards, or recognition this year?
- Can you describe a significant accomplishment in your most recent position — what was the problem, what actions did you take to resolve the situation, and what was the outcome?
- Have you been rewarded with any additional responsibility?
- How do you set yourself apart?

Questions About Education/Training/Credentials

- What special skills do you have — i.e., languages, computer skills, etc.?
- Do you have any specific training/credentials that set you apart from others who have the same job title?
- What workshops or seminars have you attended?
- Have you attended any conferences?
- Have you taken any courses related to your job recently?
- Have you achieved any new certifications or licenses?

Questions for Career Changers

- What training do you have that qualifies you to work in this field?
- What life experiences have you had that would be valuable to others?
- If you want to make a transition (to a new industry or job function), how can you make that shift?

Other General Questions

Sometimes there are questions that don't fit neatly into any other category, but that help improve the overall résumé:

- Do you have a copy of your job description or any performance evaluations?
- What are your top 3-5 strengths and personality traits?
- What are you known for at work?
- What kind of community involvement do you have? How about involvement in industry associations or professional society memberships?
- Anything else you'd like to add?

Additional Resource:

“Ask Better Questions; Write Better Résumés” Teleseminar for NRWA – July 2013

<http://thenrwa.com/event-705185>

• Only Ask Questions You Will Use

Focus on accomplishments without focusing too much on collecting extensive job description information.

- **Planning Your Work**

Organize your information before you start writing
Research the client's job target
"See the structure"

- **How, When, and Where You Write Best**

PART 2: TECHNOLOGY – TOOLS, RESEARCH & CLIENT MANAGEMENT

- **Microsoft Word**

Typing Speed
Shortcuts, Macros, and Style Sheets
Track Changes
Default Font

- **"Structured Outlines"**

What is a structured outline?

- **Writing and Research**

Occupational Outlook Handbook (current year online)

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

O*Net

<http://www.onetonline.org>

Business Journals (including top local employers, venture capital firms, associations, staffing services). Free registration.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/>

Acronym Finder

Search two ways: type in the acronym to see what it is when spelled out, or type in the full phrase to find its acronym.

<http://www.acronymfinder.com/>

Military Words (common abbreviations)

<http://www.militarywords.com/>

Find Sample Job Postings, Company Information, Career Articles, Salary Research:
Wall Street Journal's Career Journal section

<http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news-career-jobs.html>

Hoovers

<http://www.hoovers.com/>

Quintessential Careers

<http://www.quintcareers.com/>

The Riley Guide™

<http://www.rileyguide.com/>

Vault®

<http://www.vault.com/>

- **Client Management**

Client Management Templates

Lead Inquiry Response (Phone, Email, Web Form)

Templates for Draft Delivery, Final Files

Automating Contact Information

– <http://www.wisestamp.com/>

- **Inspiration**

Who better to inspire you but _____

Microsoft Word

Résumés Folder

Inspiration Book (Print, Word, Evernote)

Industry Questions (Evernote)

Resource – Free Month of Evernote Premium:

<http://bit.ly/EvernoteRWD>

PART 3: WHEN YOU'RE STUCK – 10 TIPS

Tip #1: Write With Question Marks

#1 reason you might find yourself stuck: _____

Tip #2: Key Question: “Why Should the Reader Call This Client In For An Interview?”

Past performance is the best predictor of future success.

Tip #3: Don't Start With a Blank Page (Deb Dib)

Structured outlines

The hardest part of writing a résumé is _____

Tip #4: "Unstructured Writing"

Tip #5: The Puzzle Strategy (Susan Whitcomb)

Start with the easy stuff

Fill in section headers

More easy stuff

Yellow highlighter strategy

Tip #6: Ask YOURSELF Questions To Get Unstuck

- (1) What is the most important thing this client does to help the company make money?
- (2) How is success measured in this field?
- (3) What if you gave the client's résumé and cover letter a bit more "attitude"?
- (4) What books are relevant to this industry? (Google the book's title and check out relevant core competencies.)
- (5) Ask yourself, "What exactly am I stuck on?" Write down the question ("How can I explain the two-year gap on this client's résumé?") on a piece of paper, and go do something else for 10-15 minutes.

Tip #7: Take a Break

- **"Sleep on it."** Let your subconscious mind work on the writing for you while you sleep. Re-read your notes before you go to sleep. Then keep a pen and paper or tape recorder next to your bed. When you wake up (or sometimes even during the night), the right way to handle the issue will just "come to you." One writer notes, "I always 'sleep on it,' and the following morning, I am able to put new ideas into the résumé."
- **Get your creative juices flowing — literally.** "Sometimes I do something involving movement and flow, such as going for a walk or taking a shower. Taking a break from it sometimes loosens up the thoughts." Another résumé writer says, "I go ride my bike for an hour." Do some yard work, clean a room, or work in the garden.

- **Work on something mindless.** “I usually take a break and do a load of laundry. By the time I am done, my head is cleared and the writer’s block is gone.”
- **Overcome procrastination by just getting started.** “My writer’s block is usually in the form of procrastination more than anything. I tend to go do something else, then return to the project at hand. Nothing motivates me more than a deadline!”
- **If you find yourself stuck at the end of the day, write your “stuck” question on the page: “How do I do ‘x’?” and then let it go.** The answer may just “come to you,” courtesy of your subconscious mind.

Tip #8: Find Inspiration

- **Look at other résumés.** “I browse through sample résumés and action words to see if there is a word that will spur my thoughts!” Look at other résumés you have written, or look in compiled résumé books (such as Wendy Enelow and Louise Kursmark’s “Expert” series or JIST’s “Gallery of Best Résumés” books) for ideas.
- **Find the match.** “I review my notes and look for trends reflected in how strong the match is between the successes I gather from each client and the definition of the observable behaviors associated with the best in the career field we are targeting.” Try to get a better understanding of a client’s strengths before moving forward, through additional questioning, or Google searching.
- **Bribe yourself.** “If I work on this résumé for one hour, I can take a walk, call a friend, eat chocolate...whatever works that day.”

List five ideas for a place you can use for your “creativity zone.” These can be places that you go for inspiration — outside of your usual work area. It could be somewhere outside, like your garden or a nearby park with views that inspire you.

Tip #9: Turn to Your Colleagues for Help and Advice

NRWA E-List
NRWA LinkedIn Group

Tip #10: Use Your Client As Inspiration

We Don’t Have All the Answers
Ask the Right Questions OR Find the Information in What They’ve Given Us
Put Yourself in Your Client’s Shoes