Chapter 7: Your Portfolio On Paper

Preceding every Consultant is his reputation and his portfolio on paper. Your portfolio should include a resume, a list of personal references, a business card, a flyer (or Blurb Sheet), and a list of past clients. The preparation of these paper credentials is important for success as a Temp or a Consultant. This chapter will analyze and present the best ways to prepare your portfolio on paper.

Writing A Resume For Consulting

It takes a special kind of resume to land Temp, Contracting, or Consulting jobs. After reading eight books on how to write resumes, I could not find a format that met my basic criteria. So, I developed a special format for the resume, which is based on a modified "Functional Resume." It is called the "Skill-Bullet Resume." Before going into that format, lets examine some of the rationale used to develop it.

Resumes Are Searched By Computers

Nowadays, your resume may be examined by a computer, not a person. Long before a stranger gets to read your resume, a computer may have examined it several times. The computer is asked to search all of the resumes, in a database, for certain key words that appear in the job description. These keywords are called buzzwords. Buzzwords are the phrases used in your particular industry. For example, in my field of electronics engineering, DRAM, ROM, and PENTIUM would be very common buzzwords. Your resume must have as many buzzwords in it, that can possibly fit, so that a searching computer will trigger on them. The top five people selected by the computer might be called by the Human Resources (HR) person, for an interview. The client, your future boss (alias, the head-honcho), may decide to trust the computer match, and not read your resume at all, until he meets you! He is satisfied that the proper buzzwords appear on your resume. So, a resume for Temping, Contracting, or Consulting must be loaded with industry standard buzzwords.

Clients Only Have 20 Seconds

A good resume format better tell a client what your experience is, in about 20 seconds. When I first began Consulting, I started to notice a pattern developing, in many of my interviews. Many times when I went on an interview, the client read my resume, for the first time, after I was already present. So, I made it a game of watching their eyes. They seemed to read every word for about 20 seconds, then accelerate rapidly down to the bottom of the page. I've had many interviewers, then, look up and ask me, "So what do you do for a living?" (Can you believe that?) At first, I thought they were just kidding, trying to break the ice. But after it kept reoccurring, over and over, it started to make really eat at my emotions. Sure enough, after several more interviews, clients had all kinds of excuses for not reading my resume. When they did, they did it in front of me, and spent no more than about 20 seconds.

Very few clients will have the patience to read an entire resume. When they do, it is usually because they liked what they read in the first 20 seconds. As you gain experience, you begin to realize that most clients, with a job opening, are in crisis mode and rarely have a spare 20 seconds!

A Resume Must Impress In 20 Seconds

 After analyzing several resume formats, I concluded that not one of them portrays much information in the first 20 seconds of reading! I was going to have to invent one to cover this aspect. Furthermore, resumes are factual and have very little entertainment value. Resumes can't hold an average person's attention for longer than about 20 seconds. Although you may think your resume is exciting, it can be very boring to someone who has been reading resumes all day.

Resumes Must Be Single Page

The length of the resume must never exceed 1 page. The reason for this is multifaceted. Clients are usually in crisis mode. They certainly don't have time to read a multi-page resume. In fact, most clients won't read a single page resume, until you get there for your interview. Clients prefer single page resumes because they can easily scan them while they are asking you questions. This allows them to think of questions quickly, without loosing their concentration. If you have a multipage resume, the interviewer will have to keep flipping the pages back and forth, trying to think of questions to ask you. It will become evident that the interviewer was not prepared to ask you questions. This action may become so distracting, that they may get embarrassed, at themselves. The end result is that they inadvertently forget to ask you the proper questions, and actually cut your interview short. By reducing your resume to one page, you are allowing the interviewer to be more casual! Besides, how does it look when an Advanced Consultant, with 30 years experience, comes in with a one page resume and a beginner comes in with a two page resume. Does this imply someone is trying to stretch the truth?

Every resume will fit onto a single page. I have written over forty of them for myself and over one hundred for other people. Keep your resume to a single page. It is the defacto, industry standard (i.e. thee standard format). It is easy to FAX or email. It is easy to scan into a computer and perform buzzword recognition. It is easy to cut-and-paste into an on-line search engine.   It is far less boring than a multipage resume! Most of all, it will help you during your interview. You won't be reminding the client that they forgot to read your resume before you arrived. These are only a few of the reasons for keeping your resume to a single page.

The format chosen for the resume has to have an intrinsic nature to it, that allows it to be kept on one page, forever. Remember, all of your resumes, from now on, must fit on one page! It can be very difficult for a beginner, to fill up a one page resume. However, a Consultant, could conceivably, have a more difficult time. Trying to fit 20 or more companies on a single page is impossible. So, the particular format of the resume that we decide upon, should be easily updated to fit on a single page.

Cover Letters Are Out

Almost every book written on resumes requires that you have a Cover Letter. What is it that the Cover Letter basically says? Read between the lines. It says something like, "Hi, I am me. I like the field I'm in. I'm good at it. Most of all, I'm looking for a good company to work for. I hope to contribute normal work and get rewarded handsomely for it. Please call if your company can do me this tiny favor. Sincerely..." If you leave it up to the interviewers' imagination, a cover letter can sound very disastrous! If you send a client a resume only, he knows you want work. You don't need an additional letter to say that. Your are looking for a job and you are ready to start. The cover letter can only damage your chances of finding a job.

What can we do to fix the function of a cover letter? The cover letter is so open for ridicule and miss-interpretation that there is only one thing we can do. Leave it out. It throws away the first, most valuable 20 seconds that the client has, by describing the applicant's needs, instead of his skills! Cover letters are good for teething puppies.

There is only one valid reason to ever use a cover letter. It could be used to announce your future availability. It might say you have been given a notice that you have 1 month left on your assignment, but here is your resume now.

Say Bye To The Objective

Look at any book on resumes today and you will find that the Objective section is supposed to go at the beginning of the resume. But, again, this is where the most valuable 20 seconds is located. A typical Objective is a paragraph saying something like: "I'm looking for a good job, at a great company, with all kinds of opportunity for advancement, and rewards for hard work, in a pleasant environment, and I want my title to be something cool." What the objective really needs to say is, "I'm looking for any kind of work, in my field." In fact, the resume should say that without the Objective section. Your Title says what kind of work you want. The Objective, like the Cover Letter, is subject to mis-interpretation of the interviewers' imagination! Although you may be an excellent worker, you have not yet mentioned that fact. The reader of your resume, so far, thinks you only care about yourself! You are asking them for a favor before they even know your qualifications. Never, never, never put an "Objective" on a resume! It is just like the Cover Letter. The new resume format must tell potential clients what kind of work you want, without having an objective section. This leads us to another problem with resumes that we must watch out for.

The Client's Negative Imagination

Clients and agencies are trying to find flaws in your personality, and punch holes in your resume. Because they are scrutinizing everything, a resume cannot leave anything up to the clients negative imagination concerning philosophy, religion, and politics. If you drift away from the "business facts" and start getting into philosophy, religion, politics, etc., then you most likely won't get a job with that resume. You are stimulating the clients imagination, in a negative way. This works against you, 9 times out of 10.

Consider the Objective example we talked about earlier. It begins, " I'm looking for a good job..." This is philosophical in nature. What does "a good job" mean. Does it imply you are

willing to work hard? No. Does it say you are looking for a company that really needs your help? No. Does it say you are selfish? Yes, this seems to be the most likely! When the objective talks about benefits, does this mean you are looking for more sick days and vacation days? If left up to the clients negative imagination, yes it does! There are many other examples of this in Objectives.

Lets say you are a good salesman and your resume talks about the trips you have made instead of the dollar amount of sales you have made. Does the client think you just want to travel to more places? Probably.

Let's say your resume states that you a Catholic, belong to the National Rifle Association, and like Salsa Dancing. Is the client going to need to know this to hire you as a tech-writer, publisher, technician, accountant, or engineer? Maybe is he going to think you might be carrying a concealed weapon to your interview. Maybe he will imagine that you will stay out late at night clubs? Does this mean you will be wasting time at work arguing about religion, gun rights, and organizing social gatherings? Does this mean you are highly opinionated? It could. If you put things like this on your resume, you will only hurt yourself. Why take that chance? You may not even get an interview with a resume like that.

Hence, items such as hobbies, likes, dislikes, age, religion, color, marital status, number of children, creed, objectives, articles published, scholarships won, awards won, speeches given, countries visited, security clearances, patents granted, etc., all make the client suspicious. They make the client's imagination go haywire! They have no business on a resume because they are not about business. They work the clients negative mind into a frenzy. If their negative imagination kicks in, they will conclude that you are too much of a social person and not enough of a worker. So, you're out a there. A good resume only has enough room on it for the business facts of your life, no mater how boring.

Tapping Into The Client's Positive Imagination

A resume can make use of the clients' positive imagination concerning your work skills, however. The first time I stumbled across using the clients' imagination in a positive way, was on my education status. When I first began Consulting, my resume stated that I went to 3 junior colleges. Now even though, by that time, I had accumulated 20 years of experience, as well as good references, some interviewers actually told me that I needed to complete my degree to be employed with them. They did assume that I had an A.A. degree though, but not a Bachelors degree. I didn't have either one of those. So, I asked myself, "Why do they assume I have an A.A. degree?" Simple, because I went to junior colleges, and only had junior colleges on my resume. Later on, I took two courses given by the University of Southern California (USC). As soon as I put USC on my resume, clients stopped asking me about my degree! The clients and the job agencies all ASSUME that now I have Bachelors degree. "He must have one, since he has so much experience and good references," their sub-conscious mind concludes! This proves that if the subject seems to be skill-related, business facts, and not of a philosophical, religious, or political, in nature, then, the client's positive imagination will work in your favor.

Skill-Bullets Deliver The Punch

The best way of using the clients' positive imagination is by grouping your skills into Skill-Bullets. Skill-Bullets are paragraphs that are **not attached to any particular company**.

With a Skill-Bullet Resume, the client cannot tell **where** you acquired each skill. For example, suppose I wanted to put "book publishing" on my resume. I have written a book, correct? [Don't get smart]. No one has hired me to do it, though. So, on a normal resume, there would not be a place for it. But on a resume containing skill-bullets, paragraphs that name skill after skill, "book publishing" could appear non-chalantley. The client cannot tell which company, or "where", I did this at.

With a Skill-Bullet Resume, the client cannot tell **when** you acquired each skill, either. Skill-Bullets are not listed in chronological order. They are grouped by the type of activity. Let's suppose that from 1980 to 1990 you designed stereo amplifiers. And also suppose there is a job opening for someone to design a stereo amplifier. When a client reads a resume with skill-bullets, he sees in there, "Stereo Amplifier Design". He doesn't know that it was ten years ago. With a standard resume, he would assume that if you were good at amplifier design, you would still be doing it now. So, you wouldn't even get an interview. With a Skill-Bullet Resume, his positive imagination fills in the blank. The client assumes that you have recently been doing this type of work! You are just the person he was looking for. Skill-Bullets are a good way to trigger the clients' positive imagination, in your favor, by disassociating your skills from the time that you performed them.

Note that Skill-Bullets are not designed to help you lie about your skills. You must have the skills you have written down in your resume! It is also assumed that you can execute these skills in a timely manner with confidence and precision.

A Special Skill-Bullet Section

A good resume format has to have a compact way of presenting all of the PC-related software packages, and any other special tools you have experience with. A normal resume would have these skills scattered throughout. A Skill-Bullet resume focuses these skills into a dedicated skill-bullet paragraph. This particular skill-bullet is dedicated to software and tools. One advantage, as mentioned earlier, is that no one knows how long it has been since you last used these tools. A second advantage, is that when someone is scanning for a certain tool skill, they can readily find it. This becomes very significant when dealing with software type tools. For example, if you were applying as a tech-writer, your client would want to know if you have Microsoft WORD experience, without reading your whole resume. A good resume would allow the client to scan for this WORD (no pun intended). Remember, if you force the client to actually "read" the whole resume, then they might loose interest and chuck it!

Resumes Must Be Pleasing To The Eye

Since humans tend to scan the resume instead of reading it, the resume must have ingredients in it that will catch their eyes. The eyes are caught by Indents, Bullets, Font Changes, Bold Characters, Capitals, Italics, Underlines, and Buzzwords. These types of enhancements are easy

to incorporate with today's computers. Your resume must look at least as good as the next guys. A Skill-Bullet resume automatically uses a lot of bullets and indents.

Don't consider typing a resume on a typewriter. It must be word-processed. If you do not have a computer, hire someone to straighten it out for you, after you type it. You can also go down to a copy center, such as Kinkos, and rent their computer for about $10 per hour. They will be glad to assist you with your resume and the computer.

Don't use unusual fonts on the resume. If the resume is emailed electronically, then the receiving computer must have that font installed on it. Use only the fonts that come with Microsoft Office.

The Skill-Bullet Resume

Well, now I hope you can see why the resume formats of the past are dysfunctional, especially as Consulting resumes. Let's summarize what we need in our new, Skill-Bullet Resume:

1. It must have as many buzzwords on it that can fit, so it will trigger a computer search.
2. It cannot be more than one page long, because it has to allow an interviewer to be more casual when asking questions.
3. The format must allow for it to be kept to 1 page in length, forever.
4. It must tell what your experience is in the first 20 seconds!
5. It must never have a Cover Letter, unless you cannot accept employment right away.
6. It must never have an Objective statement on it. The objective is replaced by your title.
7. It cannot leave anything up to the clients' negative imagination concerning philosophy, religion, and politics. Items such as hobbies, likes, dislikes, age, religion, color, marital status, number of children, creed, objectives, articles published, scholarships won, awards won, speeches given, countries visited, security clearances, patents granted, your own company, etc., all make the clients' negative imagination go haywire.
8. A resume needs to make use of the clients' positive imagination concerning your work skills. Doing this makes the client read positive things into the resume that aren't there. The Skill-Bullet format itself takes care of this. With this format, the client cannot tell where or when you acquired each skill. He will have to interview you to get more details.
9. A resume needs a special Skill-Bullet Paragraph to gather software and tool skills.
10. Since humans tend to scan the resume instead of reading it, the resume must have some eye-catching ingredients.

After years of research, I have developed a resume format that incorporates all of the basic principles above. It is an example of the Skill-Bullet Resume. This particular example is the 29th Consulting resume that I've done for myself. It is shown on the next page.

James R. Moore
Electronic Hardware/Firmware Design Engineer - Contractor
dba Explore Electronics Inc., 3616 So. Oxford Court, Rowland Heights, CA 91748
(562) 694-8500 Office   URL:www.ee-consultants.com   email: info@ee-consultants.com

DESIGN EXPERTISE

- Extensive Analog, Digital, Microprocessor, FPGA/ASIC Hardware Design.
- Firmware and Software Design in High-Level and Assembly Language.
- Specialize in Video, Imaging, Communications, and Process Controls.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

28 Years of Experience in Design and Test of Commercial and Aerospace Electronic Products.

Digital Circuit Designs

- Computers, Embedded Controllers: CISC, RISC, DSP types, on PCI, PC104, ISA, VME, buses, based on i960, 80486, 80186, 80196, 68020, 68331, 320C25, 80251, PIC, Z180, etc.
- Memory: DRAM, SRAM, CACHE, VRAM, NVRAM, FLASH, PCMCIA, and Disk Interfaces.
- Data Communications: T1/T3, FDDI, ETHERNET, ISDN, EPP/ECP, I2C, RS232/485, etc.
- ASIC, FPGA, PAL: CPU Glue, DRAM, DMA, Interrupt, UART, Parallel, Drawing, Rasterizing, Scanning, Stepper, Math, ECC, etc. Devices: Altera 10K, Xylinx, Lattice, Actel.

Analog Circuit Designs

- Data Acquisition: A/D and D/A Conversion, AGC, OpAmp, Comparator, Sensor, Isolation.
- Optical Circuits: CCD Camera, Scanner, Detectors, Laser, Displays, Fiber Optics.
- Communications: VHF RF, Video, Audio, TV, T-Line, PLL, Modem, FAX, FCC, EMI, ESD.
- Power Circuits: MOSFET Amplifier, Stepper, Regulator, High-Voltage, Magnetics, SMT.

Software Designs

Assembly and C Programs: Real-Time Embedded Control, Image Compression Expansion Forward Error Correction, Digital Image Processing, Data Communications, PCMCIA Card and Socket, BIOS.

Hardware and Software Tools

- Software Languages: C, BASIC, and Assembly: i960, 80X86, 68XXX, 80X51, PIC, ZXXX.
- Schematic, PCB: ORCAD, PCAD, VIEWLOGIC, VALID, PROTEL, TANGO, PCGERBER.
- Simulation, Timing: PSPICE, MATHCAD, MAXPLUS II, and CHRONOLOGY.
- ASIC, FPGA, PAL: MAXPLUS II (4 Years), AHDL, VHDL, SYNOPSIS, ABEL, PALASM.
- Machines Used: IBM PC, Logic Analyzers, Emulators, Oscilloscope, Current Probe, etc.
- PC Applications: WINDOWS 98/NT, WORD, EXCEL, ACCESS, SLICKEDIT, Internet, etc.

EXPERIENCE (partial list)

10/91- Pres. MAGTEK, Carson, Ca, EE Contractor, Credit Card Printer/Encoders, Ticket Printers.
8/92- 5/93   SYNC RESEARCH, Irvine, Ca, EE Consultant, Data Communications, PCMCIA Cards.
1/91- 10/91   OCA APPLIED OPTICS, Garden Grove, Ca, EE Contractor, Space Cameras, Lasers.
7/90- 1/91   UNISYS/TIMEPLEX, Los Angeles, Ca, EE Contractor, FDDI Data Communications.

EDUCATION

1986- 1991   CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY FULLERTON (CSUF), Fullerton, Ca.
1985- 1986   UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (USC), Los Angeles, Ca.
1970- 1985   CYPRESS, ORANGE COAST, and FULLERTON COLLEGES, Orange County, Ca.

Thank You For Your Time and Consideration.

Well, how do you like the format? Did you learn anything about me in 20 seconds? Was it easy to scan? Was it easy to keep reading? Did it keep your attention all the way to the end? Probably not. But that's Ok. All I really wanted to get across was the first 20 seconds. Lets analyze this format so we can make note of how all the basic functions were incorporated.

Your New Self-Appointed Title

The second line of the new format replaces the Objective with your new, self-appointed title. It states directly what field of work you are looking for. It can rarely be misinterpreted. Try to give yourself a title similar to those at a captive job. Carefully choose your title. It must state what you **want to do** for a living, not what you have been doing.

The trend these days is to call Temps, Contractor, and Consultants by the term "Contractor," as mentioned in an earlier chapter. It is very important to put this word on the end of your title so that people will know you want to be Freelance. If the job opening is for a captive, and they like your resume, they may call anyway.

Also, drop any references to the level of the title. Words like "Senior" should never be included. For example, Senior Accountant would become "Accountant - Contractor".

By the way, never give yourself the title of president or sole-proprietor. This does not tell of your occupation. Sometimes, when people see that you are a Temp, and that you know how to run a company, then they imagine that you are there to steal their ideas.

Now that you know your objective, you must begin to prepare to write the rest of the resume. The rest of the resume must sound like you have been doing what your title says, for quite some time. For example, if your previous title was Test Engineer, and you want to become Design Engineer, then your entire resume must be written to sound like you have been designing, not testing. You could, also, throw in your Testing experience and make it sound like a second task that you were asked to perform, on occasion. If you want to do both Testing and Designing, change your self-appointed title to read just "Engineering - Contractor."

Note, that I'm not saying that you should tell a lie. I am merely assuming that you know how to design, in this example, and feel you have been and should be doing this.

Putting the "ing" on certain words in your title can make you feel more comfortable with it. Experiment with adding "ing" on the words used for your title.

The First 20 Seconds

The EXPERTISE section, is the most important part of the resume. It is the part that has teeth. It will always be read. Most of the time it will be the only thing read! It must clearly state what you do the best. In this section, you must state what you know in 3 or 4 sentences. If the potential client sees the skill he is looking for in this section, you probably will get an interview. These sentences should be worded like a Yellow Page ad or a Business Flyer. They need not be complete sentences. Organize them from the best thing you like to do to the least. In the last

sentence, try to put something that makes you unique from all the other people in this field. What makes you better than anyone else? I like to start this last sentence with the phrase "Specialize in ..." Consider the rest of the resume to be background data used to support these 3 or 4 sentences!

The Career Highlights Section

The CAREER HIGHLIGHTS section is the meat of the resume. This section begins with the number of years of experience. Be sure to include any work experience including college courses that provided on-the-job training, as well as volunteer work. Also, include any time that was spent at your office doing intense research or work on a particular project that preoccupied your life for several months. If you have 2 unique skills that you've spent your career on, then you may need to use 2 sentences for the "number of years" of experience.

The Skill-Bullet Sections

In this section, you will find a neatly organized groups of skill-bullets. Note that they are not really paragraphs. Nor do they contain complete sentences. However, most items are bulleted. Thus the name "Skill-Bullet."

Each group of Skill-Bullets has a title. At least one of the groups is about software and tools. A human can find the skill-bullet they might be interested in because the group title is in bold type and underlined.

Inside of each Skill-Bullet group, there are bulleted lines. These are not sentences at all. Each line has a category title, followed by a colon. Each line contains a barrage of buzzwords that will light up any computer! These buzzwords and phrases are normally used throughout the industry. Be sure to use capital and small letters carefully when typing out the buzzwords. If you are not sure, use more small letters. Misplaced punctuation and spelling can cause the computer to skip over the correct buzzword. Read a few want-ads, in your field, to figure out how to phrase some of these. Notice how no one can tell WHEN you acquired these skills! For example, I haven't written any software in three years, now.

The Experience Section

This EXPERIENCE section has a couple of subtleties in it. First, the dates are contiguous, except for jobs that overlapped. There are no gaps in time. Interviewers like to look for flaws so they can make you feel bad, and try to get you to lower your price later. By taking out the gaps, you are helping the interviewer to concentrate on your good qualities. If you leave gaps in the dates, your interviewer will want to know what you did during that time. They assume you were in jail or something similar, of course. I merely stretch the amount of time from each job by 1 month or so, to make the gap disappear. Employers do not care about an adjustment of a month. I fill in the gaps and they don't ask questions. Very, very, rarely do they check the dates. Even if they did, they would probably call your old boss and ask him when you were there. He won't be able to remember exactly, anyway.

If you have a big gap, you must put in a line that states what you have done. If I needed to, I could put down my own company name, and what I worked on at the time. You may have to get creative on this. If you have a big gap of unemployment, in recent times, you could be in real trouble. This keeps many people from finding work. You must have something to put in there. Fill it in with volunteer work, took a few classes, retrained, or whatever. Make sure you fill it in. The interviewer may not actually notice.

Job agencies are not too concerned about your experience history, because they want to employ you more than you want to. If they find the right buzzword in your Skill-Bullet, and your references are good, you will get submitted to clients.

Continuing with the EXPERIENCE section, the second thing to notice is that the company names are capitalized but not the job-titles. If you capitalize or highlight your title, subconsciously you are telling the interviewer that you think more about yourself than the companies you worked for (which, luckily for the mankind species is true). So, my technique is to do the opposite. Stress the company name, with capitals, and not your title. Neither of them are going to mean anything once you start your new job, anyway.

The third area item to notice in the EXPERIENCE section, is the simple phrase at the end, describing your work at those companies. These phrases are your only company-dependent skills. Notice these are very general. They tell what the company made. They hint at what you worked on. They do not tell how many other people worked on them with you. They also do not tell what part of them you were responsible for. That part is kind of vague. By keeping your company-dependent skills vague, the client will have to call you in and interview you, if they want more information.

A final requirement for the EXPERIENCE section is that is has to be update-able, easily. Notice that the title of this section says "partial list!" This allows us to put only the past few companies on the resume. As you complete more and more jobs, you will be able to quickly and easily update your resume using this format. Simply drop off the last company on the list and add a new first one. This gives us a way of keeping the resume limited to one page.

The Education Section
Proceeding onto the last area, the EDUCATION section, we see a list of schools. In the Education section, they just want to know if you went to college at all, and how long you could stand it. In general, it should state that you have a degree, but only if you have one. If your degree is "Bachelor Of Science in Underwater Basket Weaving," and you do not want to be a weaver anymore, then just put down "Bachelor of Science Degree." If you do not have a degree, try to put down as many trade schools and colleges that will fit. Don't ever put down high schools. If high school is all that you have, leave this entire section off the resume. One reason for putting this section at the end of the resume is that they may not read down this far.

After having many years of experience and good references, the degree will loose some of it's worth. The degree should always mean something important to you, however. Remember , it is

harder to go to school than it is to actually work in industry. It should be a continuous, self-confidence boost having a degree, even if others do not think it is important.

A Final Thanks

The final ingredient required on a good resume is a nice, non-orthodox, "Thank You". I have always received good vibes while sitting there waiting for someone to read my resume, as they run across that last line. It implies, "Hay, I know you are busy, I know you are a person like me, and I really want you to know that I appreciate the time you have spent reading this. Thank You." Putting a Thank You on your resume can only do positive things. It could set your resume apart from everyone else's. If the Thank You is on the actual resume, instead of on the Cover Letter, it will get Faxed to the client by the job agency. Then the client will receive the Thank You also. The actual phrase I like is the one on my resume. It takes up an entire line, but I think it is worth it.

That completes the resume. You have a lot of work cut out for you, now. Get started on it know before you forget how this format works. We will pause here while you write your new Skill-Bullet Resume...…………….....................

The Personal Reference Sheet

Hand in hand with the resume goes the Personal Reference Sheet. It is essential that the reference sheet be prepared before the resume is sent out. When an agency calls and says, "The client likes your resume and now they want us to check your references," you have to be ready. Being able to FAX the references to them within the next five minutes, can greatly improve your chances of getting the job. The timing here is crucial. Other agencies may be bidding on this job. We don't want to loose this opportunity because of a few minutes of lag.

Companies usually require three personal references. These references must be in the same field that you are in. They must also know of your work record and capabilities. Preferably, you met them while working together on a project. Carefully choose the best three of these acquaintances. They will be your primary references.

Sometimes clients want to here from your past three supervisors. These references can be much harder to come by. Normally these would be three department managers. Now, most of the time, department managers are too detached from the actual work, to do you much good. They are the ones that lay people off or fire them. Typically, avoiding department managers as references would be wise. It is much better to use the next guy under them as a reference. This middle manager, although he was not in full control of your destiny, he does know more about your performance. Normally these individuals are known as "lead men." Carefully choose the best three of these middle managers as potential references. If you can't think of any managers that will give you a good reference, then leave this section off.

In addition to the standard categories of references, I have found that references from other job agencies can be very helpful. On paper, these job agency people actually were your supervisors, because you were their employee. Many times they know a lot about your work because the client reported to them on a regular basis. They tend to be very positive with their

recommendations because they want to do business with you in the future, by employing you again. Throughout all time, Head Hunters and Mercenaries have helped each other!

Now that we have a group of references in mind, we can prepare our these people. Calling each reference, before using them, is important for many reasons. First, any negative feelings that they may have about your work may show up. Second, if they say they will give you a good reference, but do not appear to be enthusiastic about it, then maybe you shouldn't use them anyway. If they like the idea, and they are enthusiastic to help you, then you need to give them one more test. Ask them if you can use their home telephone number. This is the final test they have to pass to insure they have no qualms about giving you a reference. You will need both the work and home phone numbers from your personal references. Home phone numbers from your supervisor references are not required, but they will help you immensely if you can get them. Having a home phone number from your previous supervisors tends to make people think you are a well-liked worker. When clients or agencies see this, they tend to not check your references at all! Note that, you should promise your references that you will be careful giving out their home phone number. For other business acquaintances, such as a job agency reference, a home phone would never be important to have. They will only need to know that you are intent on using them as a reference.

Before proceeding further, I must point out the difficulty many people have had with references. It can stop your whole career for months, if you have a problem.

Sometime in the past when I was doing captive work, I used someone for a reference that I had worked with. Everytime someone called him, he would say that I always kept up with state-of-the-art techniques, which was good. But he would go further and say that I did this by having several jobs going all the time! Well, this doesn't go over too good with clients. Clients want to think that you will be totally dedicated to their company.

Another time, a friend of mine had an extremely difficult time with our boss. So he asked another fellow if he would pretend to be his supervisor. Being a "close" friend of his, he said, "Sure, no problem. Tell me what you want me to say." Later when an agency called this reference, he said, "No, I'm not his supervisor. No, I don't think he was a Design Engineer, I think he was a Test Engineer. No, I do not know what kind of work he did. He worked in a completely different building." Surprise! This is another example of the millions of ways your references can mess you up.

If you are not getting job offers that you know you are qualified for, and it keeps happening over and over, my friend, you are getting a bad reference! Have someone, like your dad or brother, call all of your references for you. If they don't give overwhelming referrals, don't use them any more.

Coming to grips with a bad reference can be devastating to your ego. Finding out that one of your so-called friends is not recommending you is very hard to accept. Many people fail in Consulting because they refuse to believe that they are getting a bad reference! Don't be one of them!

Preparing your Personnel Reference Sheet is straightforward. See the example on the next page:

References For James Moore

Personal References:	Days	Evenings
Mark Martella, Project Engineer	(714)472-1667	(714)895-4006
Alan Moore, Software Engineering Contractor	(310)631-8603	(310)838-9358
Dave Springer, Hardware-Software Consultant	(714)838-7126	(714)997-6109
Manager References:		
Richard Leslie, JBS Controls	(310)736-2962	(310)637-2692
Fred Hesse, OCA Applied Optics	(714)449-2874	(714)449-4728
Terry Benson, Magtek	(213)631-7363	(213)136-3637
Harlan Rogers, Interstate Electronics	(818)639-0783	(818)936-3870
John Bailey, Unisys	(602)739-8987	(602)937-7898
Victor Kostrukoff, Excellon Photonics	(310)736-2992	(310)637-2992
Ron Crawford, Sync Research	(310)736-4498	(310)637-8944
Job Agency References:		
Bob Roen, Engineers Exchange	(310)103-0012	
Jerry Gallenson, Tech-Aide Corp.	(213)236-3633	
Michael Ruchman, Mini-Systems & Associates	(714)897-6105	

Notice that the Personal Reference Sheet looks much better when it is in table format. Also, notice how the commas line up and the font changes really accent it's professional look. Most beginners would not have this many references, so table format would not be necessary. However, if you do have quite a few references, put them into table format. It is much easier to read.

Many people find it hard to get good references from managers. I had the same problem when I was a captive employee. It never crossed my mind to nurture my references while I was working. Now I consciously collect everyone's' phone number, not only for references, but so I can keep in touch. Its fun to keep in touch with your friends and supervisors of the past, especially when you are much happier as a Consultant! If you do not have good references from managers, leave off the manager section. Remember, if you are planning on Temping, the job agency wants you to get a job more than you do! They want you to give them only 3 of your best personal references.

The reason I have listed more than 3 references is psychological. When a potential client sees that you are not afraid of giving him all of these references to call, day or night, especially past supervisors, they assume you are a very good worker! Also, the more references you give them, the less likely they will check any of them (not that we have to worry about it). Good Luck with your references and your Personal Reference Sheet.

We'll pause here while you put together your Reference Sheet……………………………………

Prepare Your Business Card

Now that you are a company, you can start to take advantage of some of it's benefits. You see, job agencies like to hire people that are Consultants to do Temp work! It makes them feel more confident in your ability when they see that you are already a company. To appear like a company, you will need several more items from your portfolio, beyond the Resume and Personal Reference Sheet. A Business Card is the first thing you are going to need.

Before designing a business card, we must understand it's purposes.

First, it identifies your name with your company name, and possibly company logo. Second, it has elements of your company's mission statement in it. This is a summary of what you want, and can do. It must specifically point out if you are a developer or a researcher. Third, it must make your company sound as if there are several employees in it. Hopefully, there will be some day. Fourth, it gives you the title that you've always wanted. And finally, it has both an address and phone number on it. If you do not want others to know where you live, then you will need a Post Office Box. You should avoid making non-voice contact with a stranger. Here is an example of a business card:
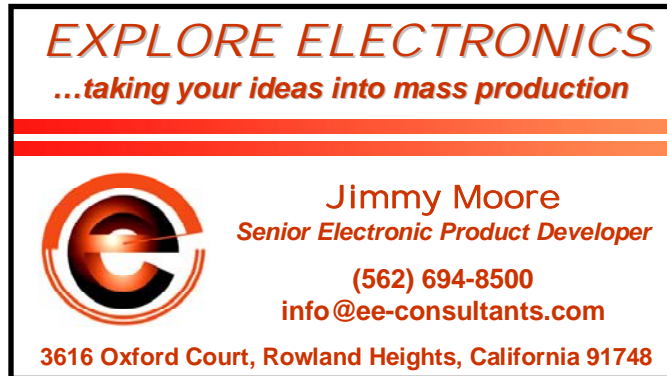
Business Cards are ment to be somewhat vague. Yet, if someone in your field gets it, they probably can tell what it means. Referring to the example, can you tell how large this company is? Can you tell what the company is involved in? Can you tell what I do for a living? Those of you in Electronic Design probably can. Keeping you business card a little vague will get you more phone calls.

Business Cards are primarily a closing act for a referral. When someone comes to you and asks, "Do you know a good electronic hardware engineer?" You can say, "Well, not personally, but I have this card from a friend of a friend. I've never worked with him, but I here he is good. I do know that he charges a lot." So, the card, or at least the phone number, is passed along. Situations always come up where you need a business card. Some examples are, when you make contact with a past friend, when someone you work with is moving on, when you just finished an interview, when you want a salesman to send you a quote, etc. It is a convenient way of passing out your phone number and address. You don't need to try to find a piece of paper and a pencil, like crayon on a napkin at Denny's. You are competing with other people that have business cards. Therefore, you need one too.

Making the Business Card stand out, using art, implies that you are creative. Most people prefer to see art. Look at other people's cards before you begin your graphics design. There are many examples of other people's business cards at the places where the make them. Many of your larger copy centers, such as Kinkos, makes Business Cards. Their prices are fairly reasonable, too. For about $100, you can get 500 cards. If you use art, color, or a complex logo, the price can double. I have found, however, that 500 cards can last a few years. I think it is worth the extra expense to spice it up with graphics art and a logo, if you can afford it. Get your cards done today, before you loose another potential client!

These days you can design a good business card on the PC. Go get some 24lb. Card Stock from Office Depot and drop it into your Color or Laser printer. Word knows how to support those sheets of business cards.

We'll wait while you design it now……………………………………………………………

Preparing a Blurb Sheet

One of the more useful forms of advertising for the Contractor or Consultant is the Blurb Sheet. A Blurb Sheet is a fancy list of services that your company (your schizophrenic self) regularly provides.

The Blurb Sheet is a single sheet flyer. Many of the basic resume writing rules apply to the Blurb Sheet. In addition, a few other ingredients must be added.

- It must have a company logo on it. Logo's cost about $250 to have designed.
- It must be printed on thick, 24 pound, glossy paper.
- It must be in color.
- It has some wording similar to a high-powered advertisement.
- It contains a list of your basic and expert services.
- It gives the impression that many people are employed at your company.

An example of a Blurb Sheet is shown on the next page.

The Blurb Sheet provides a Quick and Easy way of presenting all of your capabilities to the client. It should accompany your resume whenever you apply for a Contracting or Consulting position. As mentioned earlier, some Temp agencies are interested in the Blurb, also.

Many times writing the Blurb Sheet is easier than writing the resume. It can help to organize your thoughts about you skills; what you want to offer, and what you want to avoid. You may, after writing your Blurb, want to go back and tweak your resume.

You should write a black and white Blurb Sheet now……………..……………………..

The Client Reference Sheet

A Client Reference Sheet is a list of all of your past clients. It also states what you worked on at each company. The style used for a Client Reference Sheet is quite vague. It need not mention your title, nor the dates you worked at these companies. It merely states which companies you have been at. It is more of an instrument to brag about some of the things that you have done for other companies.

The Client Reference Sheet gives the potential client a feeling of the depth of your consulting experience. If you have worked for well-known, large companies the client could be impressed. Some clients really don't care where you have worked before. Most of them, however, are easily impressionable. Sometimes the Client Reference Sheet will help your future boss justify your exorbitant wages to upper management. In others words, you are giving them something to brag about to their bosses. Frequently, clients will see some of the past companies they have worked for in your sheet, or they will know someone that presently works at one of the companies listed. This tends to make them feel more comfortable about hiring you. An example of a Client reference sheet is shown on the next page. Notice that the company names are in alphabetical order.

List of Past Clients for Explore Electronics Inc.

Alpha Peripherals	PCMCIA Cardbus **Peripherals**
Calcomp	**Mass Storage** and Color Printers
Cartwright	**Radar** and **Laser Weapon** Scoring Systems
Compuaire	**Air Conditioning** Control Systems
Cochran Consulting	Semiconductor **Wafer Fabrication** Controls
Conexant	Audio/Video **ASIC Design and Verification**
Data Technology	**Data Acquisition** and Instrumentation
Excellon Photonics	10,000 DPI Direct **Laser Imaging** Machines
Fluor	**Telecommunications** and Process Controls
L3 – Interstate	Military Plasma and LCD **Graphics Displays**
Intrinsix	**Mixed-mode ASIC Design**, Simulation, Verification
JBS Controls	**Process Control** Systems
Lazer Micro	**Personal Computers** and Peripherals
Magnavox	Military **Spread Spectrum** Modems and **FAX** Machines
Magtek	**Color Printers**, **Ticket Printers**, **Magnetic-Stripe**
Newport Electronics	**Instrumentation** and Process Controls
Corning-OCA	**Space-born Sensors** and Camera Systems
Pairgain	T1, T3, **DSL Communications**, M13 **Multiplexers**
Panasonic Aero (MAS)	In-Flight **Satellite TV Receiver**
Perkin Elmer	Laser **Range Finder** and **Camera** Instrumentation
Pertek Engineering	10/100 **Ethernet** Communications
Players West	**Arcade Games**
Powell Industries	Large Process **Control Systems**
Process Systems	Process Controls and **Programmable Valve Systems**
Rainbow Technology	Mixed-mode **Encryption ASIC's**
RLH Industries	**Fiber Optic** Communications
Siemens	**Data Communications** and Telephone **PBX Systems**
Sync Research	**PCMCIA** Sockets
TuneIn Entertainment	**Video Games** and **Toys**
Unisys	**Fiber Optic** Data Communications
Velotec	Instrumentation and **Data Acquisition** Systems
Visioneered Systems	Jumbotron **LED Displays**

Now is a good time to write your Client Reference Sheet. Put down every company that you've ever worked for, even if you were a student at the time, into the format shown. We'll wait…………………………………………………………………………….………..

Summary

Your entire portfolio on paper should be looking pretty good by now. You can present yourself as a person looking for work or as a company looking for work. You can now email things out that will find you work, while you keep your present job. Potential clients can study your qualifications and check your references before they offer you a job.

Are you ready to accept a new job? Not yet! Before you start advertising your services to a cheap-skate world, you need to have a good idea about how much to charge and how to haggle for it. These are the subjects of the next few chapters.

A quick reminder here, don't mail out your resumes yet, until you can comfortably haggle with other people about your pay.