

A Few Notes About Resumes

Create a Resume that Gets Interviews

Buying Motivators and Value Propositions

When you apply for an articling job, you are marketing yourself to an employer. Another way of looking at this is that you are marketing a product to a buyer. To market this product effectively, you need to have a good idea of what the buyer (employer) wants and needs, and what will motivate them to buy you over other products (or articling candidates). You need to develop a value proposition that summarizes how you are a good (or the best) match for their buying motivators.

To come up with your “value proposition,” consider the following. You’ll want to do a generic run-through for your general articling goals, and then edit specifics for each firm you apply to:

- What is your target role? What kind (size, activities, products, and services, etc.) of firm? What areas of law? What types of clients? Answers to this question will help with responses to the next.
- What are your target organizations’ buying motivators? Meaning what technical and transferrable skills do they look for in an articling student, and how will they expect you to contribute to firm success? What activities (both technical and soft) will you be expected to perform? Much of this information can be researched in the job posting, on the corporate website, and in networking meetings with current associates/partners. Most law firms recruiting articling students are looking for: customer service experience and service mindset; time management; problem-solving; community involvement (particularly in legal contexts); entrepreneurial mindset and/or business development; and humility and hunger to succeed.
- What qualifications, experiences, and past accomplishments allow you to satisfy the buying motivators of your target organizations and roles? What items in your resume/cover letter are not relevant to the role you want?
- What added value do you bring? Relevant languages? Personality characteristics? In other words, what sets you apart from other candidates as “the best” for your target roles? What personal characteristics would former/current supervisors and colleagues comment positively on?

Profiles

Once you have given the above some thought, you can write a profile, or summary paragraph, describing some of these qualifications, experiences, and added value points. If you have significant work experience, you may use this paragraph to lead off your resume. Keep it relatively short – four to five lines is ideal.

If you decide not to include a profile section, the paragraph can act as a guide for relevant and value-added job description content.

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions should ideally consist of the following:

- Employer name (bold text), location, and dates (including months).
- A summary of the organization: Organizational products and/or services, number of employees and locations, revenues, and anything else relevant. This gives context to your working environment, especially if your employer is not well known.
- Job title (bold text).
- A summary of work context: This can include who you reported to, how many reported to you (if any), and a high-level (not too detailed) listing of accountabilities. This gives job context and allows you to cut out a lot of the bullets and bulk found in most job descriptions, many of which can be guessed (and therefore add no value) from job title and industry.
- One to five Accomplishment bullets: Describe how you added value for your employer, with relevant actions and impacts (to the buying organization and your value proposition), in a SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Action- and Result- oriented, and Time-bound).

Describe the most recent three to four jobs, going back ten years maximum. If you have an extensive work history and earlier positions are relevant, they can be listed in a “Previous Roles” subsection (job title, employer, dates, no detail).

Wording

Be careful about resume buzz-words and buzz-terms, and other common resume *faux pas*. For more on terms to avoid and alternatives to include, see this [online article](#).

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