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CIO Resumes: Compare Yours to the Cream of the Crop

CIO.com obtained three examples of actual CIO resumes that executive recruiters deem outstanding enough to prompt a call about job opportunities. How does your resume stack up to these fine specimens?

– Meridith Levinson

If you've recently begun to update your résumé, you've probably encountered conflicting opinions on how to write a résumé for a CIO position so as to attract an executive recruiter's attention. For example, you may have heard or read that your résumé needs to tell a story about your work experience, and thus needs to include specific details about your professional accomplishments. Yet you've probably also read that a résumé, by nature, should be brief, and that the goal of your résumé is to give the executive recruiter just enough information to make him want to call you to find out more. Such contradictory advice can curse even the most effective communicators with writer's block when they have to re-write their résumés.

So forget everything you've ever heard or read about writing a CIO résumé. CIO.com is here to demystify the process once and for all. We asked several executive recruiters what they need to see in a CIO résumé to make them say, I need to call this person! Their answers were straightforward and consistent. They look for three main things: a stable, solid career that's progressed over the years, indications of the candidate's leadership ability and a hint of personality.

In this article, CIO.com presents six best practices for writing a CIO résumé that will get executive recruiters to call you. To illustrate these best practices, we share with you three examples of actual CIO résumés that recruiters have deemed outstanding. (We removed names, contact information and company names from these résumés to protect the identities of the CIOs who wrote them.) We include the examples not so that you can copy them verbatim, which would be a mistake since they would not accurately reflect your experience or writing style, but so that you can get a clear picture of what makes for an effective CIO résumé.

Best Practices for Writing a CIO Résumé

1. Be brief. The purpose of your résumé is to make a recruiter think, "I need to call this CIO." So you don't need to provide a ton of detail on your résumé, says David Brown, an executive recruiter with Chicago-based search firm Cavoure LP. You just need to give recruiters a sense of what you've done in the past, so that they can see if you're a match for any current searches.

At a bare minimum, all executive recruiters really want to see is where you worked, what positions you held, how long you held those positions, what your most relevant accomplishments were in those positions, and your educational background. Based on that information, they'll be able to determine whether your experience may be right for an open position.

Being brief forces you to choose the accomplishments that are most relevant to the role for which you're submitting your résumé (that is, if you're sending your résumé in response to a specific position, as opposed to simply getting on a recruiter's radar). If you're not applying for a specific position, choose the accomplishments in each role that are most relevant to a CIO role in general—in other words, accomplishments that demonstrate your effectiveness as a leader and ability to drive business value.

So what do all of these recommendations mean for the length of your résumé? Executive recruiters agree that a CIO résumé should not be much more than two to three pages.

2. Be clear. Use a traditional, chronological résumé format that makes it easy for executive recruiters to see those key facts that are so important to them: where you worked, what positions you held, and how long you held those positions. Company names and titles should be in bold. Accomplishments should be set off with bullet points.

If you've worked for any companies that aren't household names, Cavoure's Brown recommends including a brief description of the company, such as, "The Spoke and Wheel Company, a \$1.5 billion manufacturer of widgets."

Brown also warns CIOs against trying to hide gaps in their employment history on their résumés. "If it looks like somebody is intentionally trying to hide things, to keep red flags from popping up, it doesn't do them too much good," he says. "It'll come up eventually. I'm a believer in full

transparency, and I think most people who recruit on a regular basis are good at spotting potential concerns.”

3. Focus on business value. Brown notes that most of the résumés he receives from CIOs focus on technical accomplishments and implementations; they don’t speak to the value those projects delivered to the business, which he says is a mistake.

Marc Lewis, CEO of Westport, Conn.-based executive search firm Leadership Capital Group, advises CIOs to quantify their accomplishments in dollar amounts or percentages and to highlight things like profit, EBITDA or ROI improvements that their projects helped bring about.

As well, resist the temptation to include on your résumé a laundry list of technologies with which you’ve worked. (Some résumé “experts” recommend doing this to get through résumé scanning software.) The executive recruiters CIO.com interviewed for this article say that it’s fine to mention specific technologies within your accomplishments (for example, “Consolidated 17 SAP ERP systems down to a single instance), but they warn against naming all the technologies with which you’ve ever worked in a separate section of your résumé. Doing so will make you look like a “technogeek,” says Lewis, and these days companies want to recruit business-focused CIOs.

4. Convey your leadership capability. One of the key criteria for landing a CIO position is being an effective leader. CIOs can convey their leadership capabilities on their résumés in two primary ways:

- by mentioning accomplishments that involved team-building, turnarounds, change management, or partnering with other business functions or executives.
- by describing the size and scope of the organization you oversaw (in other words, whether you were a global CIO or a divisional CIO, the size of your IT organization, the size of your IT budget, or the number of direct reports you managed).

5. Show a steady career progression. When executive recruiters read résumés, they look for patterns—especially patterns that show consistent career growth. They want to see that a candidate has progressively moved up the career ladder to positions of increasing responsibility and that each of the candidate’s career moves “pedigreed” him or her, says Chuck Pappalardo, managing director of Trilogy Search Non+Profit. Pappalardo also wants to see that candidates have stayed in their jobs long enough to have made substantial contributions to their employers.

6. Be human. In addition to assessing your leadership capabilities, some executive recruiters also use your résumé to begin to understand who you are as an individual (of course, a follow-up phone call and subsequent interviews will further elucidate your personality).

Now, executive recruiters are not looking for a list of your hobbies and interests. What Pappalardo wants is to get a sense of a candidate’s personality through his or her writing style so that he can begin to assess the candidate’s potential cultural fit with a client. He advises CIOs to write their résumés in their own words, using a polished-yet-conversational tone. “I don’t want to read stylized language,” he says.

Check out the following CIO résumés to see how three CIOs have implemented these best practices and to see how your résumé measures up.

Follow this [link](#) to the main article, which will provide access to the three resumes.

Note: When you enter this [link](#) into your browser, you may have to register to read the information.

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