

Putting Your Best Foot Forward

Résumé writing for fitness professionals

BY LAWRENCE BISCONTINI



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With the growing interest in certification standards in the personal training industry, an oftentimes overlooked area is career development. Two fundamental words that begin with the letter "p" characterize the developmental objectives of securing employment. First, personal trainers have to look good on *paper*; a résumé must brilliantly and professionally summarize all strengths in one succinct area. Second, personal trainers have to be skilled at summarizing their strengths when conducting the interview process in *person*; the right image during an in-person interview can help secure the right position. Let's examine the skills for making the most of the *paper* and *person* interviewing tools.

The written résumé has changed quite a bit in recent years. The format that many of us may have learned to create in high school during the last century is now outdated. As coordinator and talent scout for spas and fitness centers around the world, I view quite a few résumés on a daily basis. Perhaps the most valuable tip for résumé writing is to remember that the person reading your résumé will likely have very little time and quite a few other (competing) résumés from other sources. To make sure that your résumé both stands out and reflects your skills adequately, the following information will help.

RÉSUMÉ TIPS:

Section 1: The Contact Section

- The best paper color choices for résumés are usually white and off-white, though it is OK to use a light pastel color to attract attention.
- Enter your name, telephone contact, e-mail contact information and/or Web site, and address in the center at the top, in that order. Numerous telephone contacts can complicate the résumé: The more simple you can keep your contacts the easier it will be to locate you. (Nobody wants to think about dialing five different numbers in order to schedule you for an interview.) If you have a Web site or blog site (such as myspace.com or facebook.com), list the link for the reader to find out more about you online.
- A small headshot in color or black and white at the top right of the résumé page will personalize and draw in the reader's attention.

Example for the top of your résumé:

Lawrence Biscontini, MA
 Mobile: 787.509.0786
 biscontini@aol.com
 www.findlawrence.com
 PO Box 415
 Mykonos, 84600
 Greece

Section 2: The Qualifications Section

- List your fitness and wellness certifications starting with the most *recent* at the top. For every certification, enter the date listed on the card or certificate from the certifying body, the name, type of certification, specific number, and always list "current" if, indeed, you currently maintain your certification.
- List other formal education using the same format under a heading entitled "Education."

Example:

Certifications

June 1, 2008: Aerobics and Fitness
 Association of America (AFAA)
 Group Fitness Certification,
 #123456, current.

January, 2008: BA in Physical Education from
 Fitness University

December 1, 2007: CPR training from the
 American Red Cross

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Education

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Section 3: The Experience Section

- List here anything else that “sells” you as an ideal candidate for the position, in separate categories if necessary. Possible fitness résumé categories may include: “Awards,” “Press” (including any newspaper, television or magazine articles in which you have appeared or authored), “Continuing Education” (including dates of any and all conferences and online courses you have attended, starting with the most recent), “Employment & Experience” (including names and telephone numbers for all positions where you have worked), “Celebrity Clientele” (if you have permission to mention anyone you have trained from radio, TV, government, churches, etc.).
- Ask yourself if there are any other unique qualities that you possess and either incorporate these into existing categories on the résumé or create an additional category.

Résumés should be kept to one page if possible. If it needs to be two pages it should be printed front-to-back. Proof your résumé for two qualities. First, in terms of content, be sure that your résumé reflects your current role in the fitness realm. Second, in terms of style, be sure that your résumé looks professional, concise and stands out from the competition. Try to use a font size ranging between 10 to 14. Remember that someone most likely will give your résumé a glance-over in under two minutes, and your categories and strengths should promote themselves with a clear, eye-catching, easy-to-read layout.

Interview Tips: Make the Best Impression

After the résumé, the personal interview will offer both the employer and you the opportunity to see if an ideal match exists. In addition to being a bit early for the interview, dressing in a professional manner is important. A candidate, even in a fitness environment, may want to consider business attire for an interview in order to convey a professional image. If you’re scheduled for an interview during a regular workday and this is not possible, changing to fresh fitness clothes before an interview is a must because nobody’s physical appearance is at an optimum immediately after teaching. In addition, the following tips may help you highlight your best qualities:

- Breath fresheners before an interview may be important, but avoid gum during an interview.
- When asked a question, try to answer in two sentences maximum, and be clear. To assist, it helps always to restate the question before answering. This ensures that you understand exactly what is being asked, gives you a moment to think about the answer, and helps you avoid going off on a tangent. Let your true personality shine during the interview; show the company what it will get if it hires you.
- Prepare in your mind your “top three qualities and accomplishments” that show why you are ideal for a job, and be sure to reference them in your answers when appropriate.
- Prepare in your mind the “top three questions” you want to ask. Usually, interviewers ask at the end, “Do you have any questions for me?” or “Is there anything else you want me to know about you that we did not address in this interview?” at which point you can refer to your prepared topics.
- After the interview, you may wish to follow up with the interviewer by phone or e-mail to express your gratitude for the opportunity to meet him/her. This is also the ideal time to reiterate that you are the best candidate for the position. You may wish to say something such as, “I would like to thank you for the opportunity to interview with you and wish to reiterate my conviction that I am an ideal candidate for this position.” This shows how enthusiastic you are to begin at the prospective company.

Career growth today takes two forms: The written résumé starts the process, and the live interview continues it. Learning how to make the most out of these resources can help you exhibit your most positive attributes when seeking out career development.

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Lawrence Biscontini, MA, is a contributing author for *American Fitness*. He has won Instructor of the Year Awards from ACE (2002), IDEA (2004), Can Fit Pro (Specialty, 2004) and Best Mind-Body Presenter (ECA, 2005). Lawrence works as a trainer and wellness and spa consultant for his company FG2000, as well as AFAA, Golden Door Spas, Reebok, Resistaball® International and Gliding, and has created Yo-Chi®. His newest book is *Running the Show: Excellence in Customer Service for Fitness*. Find Lawrence at findlawrence.com!