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randstad risesmart resume guidelines.

These guidelines outline RiseSmart's recommendations for an impactful resume, based on the best practices of the Professional Association of Resume Writers. They are designed to help you stand out from your competition, translate your military experience in to landing a civilian job and effectively navigate the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) software that companies use to manage candidate applications.

the purpose of a resume

A resume does not land you the job - it's a tool for getting responses, phone calls, and interviews. Because of today's highly competitive job market, your resume needs to set you apart from both your internal and external competition. It should:

- Translate the skills and training received in the military into language that will help recruiters and hiring managers understand your transferrable skills.
- Be a brief overview to sell your knowledge, skills and experience and how your experience can add immediate value to an organization.
- Demonstrate your value and contributions as opposed to just listing your day-to-day responsibilities.
- Keep the reader engaged with active language to describe your achievements and responsibilities.
- Find unique accomplishments for each role that highlight your ability to take on new tasks and to continually learn new skills.
- Provide scope wherever possible (e.g., budget sizes, team sizes, scope of action, etc.) and quantify as much as possible (contribution to the mission).
- Feature what is unique about military service by adding new skills, competencies, cross-cultural experience and language skills.

core components of an effective resume

The average recruiter spends 6 seconds reviewing a resume. Four seconds are spent looking at only four areas: 1) j titles, 2) work experience 3) start/end dates, and 4) education. Tips for maximizing today's resume sections:

objective title

Today's resumes focus on the depth and breadth of your work history while showcasing your hard and soft skill in an easy to read Professional Summary. Instead of adding an Objective Statement you can use this space on the resume to help a reader quickly understand how your military experience and training can add value to their organization. Your summary can include the branch of the military you served in, final rank, training or career path and date of discharge. You can also explain the unit size you served in and type of activities you contributed to so readers can see the scope of your role. This immediately informs the reader about your career direction and shows why you are a fit for the role you are seeking.

If you are sending the resume to networking contacts, adjust the objective title based on your goals. You can access O*NET online.org and use the crosswalk tool to translate your Military Occupation Classification (MOC) into civilian work titles. An example of a specific objective title could be "Operations Administrator" to

"Computer Information Systems Manager," while a general title may be "IT Systems Manager." If you are responding to job ads, edit the objective title to match the title in the job ad.

summary statement

A summary statement is a short paragraph or a list of bullet points that provides a brief overview of what you offer. The goal of the summary is to communicate your value as quickly as possible and it typically covers:

- Your rank, military branch, locations, discharge date and years of experience in a specific area or field
- If you have industry experience add those as well
- Your area of specialty and what makes you unique
- Types of results you deliver consistently

key skills

A listing of key skills or areas of expertise can be three to five lines that include key words and terms from your skill set. This can be useful for key word optimization on Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), which are used by potential employers to process, track, and filter online applications. You can modify and reprioritize this section based on the major key words related to your target job descriptions. Besides being useful for the ATS, it also visually stands out to readers.

Your hard and soft skills should be relevant to the civilian job market. The O*NET Crosswalk tool allows you to enter your MOC and to find roles where your skills would be applicable. For example, using the title "Infantry" you will find roles within Fire Departments, and as Operations and Administrative professionals. By drilling down on the job titles within the O*NET tool you can find civilian equivalents for your skills.

layout

Regardless of which format is used, the professional experience section should be laid out as clearly as possible, calling attention to the most important points. This can be done by listing a brief paragraph of day-to-day responsibilities and tasks followed by bullet points highlighting specific contributions, results, or major projects for each position or rank; it should be a list of concise bullets that are accomplishment focused.

- REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL FORMAT: Professional experience immediately following the summary and key skills sections, starting with the most recent position first and moving back in time. This can be useful if you would like all of the information and contributions to be clearly linked to role or rank.
- FUNCTIONAL FORMAT: Outlines skills and professional experience in a non-chronological manner. Most frequently used for those looking to change career paths, or those translating military experience to the civilian workforce. You can add start and end dates for each role or rank to show continuity.
- COMBINATION FORMAT: Includes a brief section of three to five specific examples of your experience related to the target job or career located before the professional experience section. This section shouldn't take up too much space; its main objective is to provide a snapshot of accomplishments to further back up statements made in the summary. This format is typically useful for job seekers with quantifiable information to highlight, such as cost savings, process improvement or major initiatives. It can also be useful if you have specific prior experience (i.e., industry-specific or working with government contractors in that industry or function-specific) you would like to highlight as part of your current goal.

accomplishments

Accomplishments are key to not only your resume and interviewing but your entire job search strategy. An accomplishment is something that you personally did that improved a situation, solved a problem, and/or contributed either in value or substance.

- What is the greatest contribution you have made in this position?
- What are the challenges you have faced? Be specific about your actions and the results.
- Describe a few actions you have worked on. Be as specific as possible and include results.
- Have you done anything that has increased efficiency or saved time? If so, how much?
- How has your work service the success of others (i.e. training or mentoring)?
- When did you partner with someone to successfully to complete an action or mission?
- What ideas for process improvements have you voiced that were adopted?
- Are you evaluated on specific performance metrics in your unit? If so, how has your performance rated in comparison to others?

Accomplishments can also be related to the scope of your job (answering "who" or "how many" type questions) or related to accolades and awards you have received. To find ideas, consult your Vocational and Military Employment Training documentation and fitness records.

Here are several examples of accomplishments:

- Managed large inventory of sensitive multi-million-dollar telecommunications equipment maintaining working order at all times and ensuring team had what it needed to complete each mission.
- Trained team members on processes and procedures resulting in an efficient and high-performing unit.
- Acted as first point- of-contact for base Family Support Center, assisting spouses and families with relocation support, housing leads, employment services and transition assistance, responding to over 100 calls per day.
- Supervised three military personnel, creating plans and delegating tasks leading to timely completion of all duties.
- Volunteered to attend the 10-month Logistics, Planning, and Management training program, which added to my knowledge of operational logistics and management.
- Selected to participate in Leadership Development programs, successfully completing nine-month leadership course, graduating within the top 5% of class.
- Successfully completed Phase IV and Phase V Advanced Individual Training which identified areas of strength and skills, leading to being selected to attend Department of Defense Fire Academy.
- Completed a 12-month deployment in Iraq; conducted foot patrols and completed missions as a reconnaissance specialist and surveyor, receiving two achievement metals for service.

additional sections

Depending on your experience, career direction, and goals, you may also decide to add the following sections.

Education Typically listed at the end of the resume; although it may also be listed before the professional experience section if you are entry level or if the degree is recent and relevant to your current direction. You can also add a section that talks about your role specific training.

Affiliations & Community Involvement Professional memberships and volunteer activity can be listed at the bottom of the resume. Depending on the amount of space available, you can provide more details, or you can list only the role, organization, and length of service.

Technical Skills Software and technical skills that you use on the job can be listed in a separate section at the bottom of the resume. Make sure to highlight only the most relevant tools, software, and programs based on the jobs you are applying to. Include specialty training courses you volunteered or were asked to attend. If the technical skills section doesn't take up too much space but is central to your job (such as a Software Engineer), you should list it toward the top of the resume, right before the professional experience section.

Patents & Publications Depending on your military branch and rank, you may have contributed to new processes or technologies. You can provide a brief snapshot (preferably the most recent) in your resume. If you have a lengthy list, you can include them on an addendum, which can be provided later or upon request.

Awards & Professional Recognition Itemize awards, commendations, honors, and endorsements received for outstanding achievements to confirm your high-standing reputation within the military and with previous employers.

resume standards & best practices

Some general guidelines to follow as you evolve and refine your resume in response to new opportunities:

- The standard and recommended length for a resume is one full page or two full pages (avoid quarter or half pages). There may be an exception if you are in a highly scientific/technical field and require a CV. An addendum may be used for additional experience beyond these recommendations.
- Margins of a resume should be no less than 0.5 inches all around.
- Use a common font to avoid Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) compatibility issues. Common fonts include Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Tahoma, Verdana, Cambria, Garamond, and Book Antiqua. Font size should be 10 pt. to 11.5 pt.
- Include active language and high-impact words throughout. Keep your language in present tense when describing a current position and use past tense for accomplishments that are completed (even with your current position) and for descriptions of prior positions.
- Use implied first person throughout; avoid using personal pronouns (I, me, my). For example, write "Directed ABC project with team of six engineers" not "I directed…"
- Avoid using military language, jargon, slang, abbreviations or acronyms that are not recognizable in the civilian world.
- Incorporate basic design elements (e.g., bolding and lines to separate sections), but never a picture.
- List years of experience as 10+, 15+, or a maximum of 20+ in the summary. Avoid listing years for positions or education that go back more than 15-20 years (use "Prior to XXXX" instead).
- It can be acceptable to only list years of experience on resumes (2017-2019).
- Use "and" instead of ampersands (&) within content unless it's part of a title or term (e.g., M&A).
- Avoid long lists of bullets or large text blocks; break them into categories to provide a visual break.
- Don't use text boxes or tables to list information (i.e., summary statements, key skills, etc.) or put the resume in a PDF format if you are planning to submit the resume online. These features may not be compatible with the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) software.

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steps to tailoring your resume

To be competitive in today's job market, your resume must not only be well written, but tailored to each position. Tailoring your foundation resume for each position you target will have a major impact on results!

why tailoring works

In addition to sending the message that you are a great fit for a position, a tailored resume also helps with ATS compatibility. Many companies rely on an ATS or on online job boards, which use word-matching technology to compare an applicant's resume to a job posting.

tailoring your resume sections

When tailoring your resume, focus on three key areas: Objective Title / Branding Statement, Professional Summary, and Skill Set. If you are highly interested in a role, you may want to focus on the accomplishments related to the position as well by adding examples of similar work completed.

Objective Title / Branding Statement You can either a) put the title from the job posting at the top of your own resume or b) update the title of your resume to closely match the title of the job posting and required skills. For instance, if you are an "Administrative Specialist" in the Marine Corps seeking a job as the "Assistant to the Director of HR" you could simply put that exact title, or "Administrative Assistant" at the top of your resume. You can also show field and industry expertise on your title in the resume. For example, if you were an "Administrative Specialist" focused on personnel you could put "Human Resources Specialist".

Professional Summary Statement A professional summary demonstrates your unique value to a potential employer. Show you have as much of the desired experience and skills as possible. Review the job posting of interest and highlight any key phrases. Next, weave these key phrases into the professional summary section of your resume. Don't make this section too bulky, but make sure to show off your top qualification.

Skill Set Present your specific strengths and expertise in an easy to read format using industry-related "buzz words" and key words that match your military training from the job description. Prioritize the list while adding and removing items to ensure your resume appears as relevant as possible to the job you apply to.

Checklist Use this handy checklist to tailor your resume for each position you apply to.

- ✓ Review the company, position, and industry
- ✓ Use the O*NET Crosswalk to translate military experience into civilian roles that aligned with your military experience or training, identify transferrable skills and experience.
- ✓ Decide how you are going to sell yourself - what are they really looking for?
- ✓ Look at the job posting of interest and highlight key words and phrases
- ✓ Tailor the Objective Title to match the title of the job posting
- ✓ Tailor the Professional Summary section by weaving in the highlighted key phrases into this small paragraph - but be sure not to make this section too long
- ✓ Tailor the Skill Set by adding in field and industry-related "buzz words" as well as the key words from the job posting of interest
- ✓ Review the entire resume to see if there are other skills, responsibilities, or achievements that should be highlighted or prioritized to show you are a great match for the job

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Below, you can review a sample job posting and resume that incorporates the ideas presented.

sample job posting
Notice the key words and phrases highlighted below. These can be incorporated into the resume.

Logistics Coordinator
- The Premier Client Management (PCM) team is focused on enhancing client relationships and developing strategies for the long-term account growth of Echo's top national truckload clients. You will help achieve business goals by managing the day-to-day operations of the account team and ensuring we go above and beyond customer expectations. Working closely with your team, you will execute all functions of the clients' shipping needs; help to identify exceptions in the booking and tracking process, track shipments sufficiently to verify pickups and deliveries will be made on time, manage exceptions and service failures proactively and manage customer invoices.

  You:
  Are always one step ahead, you know how to identify where help is needed and offer it before you're asked

  - Have mastered the ability to build and maintain strong client partnerships
  - Can solve any problem that's thrown your way
  - Possess a truckload background or a strong desire to gain knowledge of the market and industry trends
  - Thrive in fast-paced environment and can shift priorities effortlessly

Compare the above Sample Job Posting with the Sample Resume below.

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sample resume tailored to fit job posting
Once you've identified the keywords in the job description, you can apply them to the resume:

Name

City, State Zip | Phone | Email | LinkedIn

Summary of Qualifications

Highly analytical, detail-oriented **Logistics Coordinator** with extensive experience in proactive problem-solving, managing truck load operations as a Logistics Support Technician in the United States Navy with a final rank of Enlisted and a Honorary Discharge date of XX. Duties included managing day-to-day operations demand planning, logistics including shipping, tracking and verification of shipments. Efficiently triaged exceptions and shipping failures and provided solutions to meet needs. Used customer-service and communication skills to establish partnerships that led to long-term relationships vendors and team. Quickly adapt to changing priorities and thrive in fast-paced organizations. Strive for continuous improvement by researching and seeking knowledge of the competitive landscape and industry.

   Technical skills: SAP, PeopleSoft, Ariba, Access, Microsoft Office, Windows NT, and Windows XP.

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how to build powerful summary statements.

One main feature of a resume is the Summary Statement. This section is a brief statement outlining who you are, and what impact you'll make at the company. This might include your overall qualifications that support your professional objective: things like number of years of relevant experience, credentials, special training. and translate it at a high-level to civilian roles.

> *Caution: do not use an objective statement, such as "Looking for a new opportunity where I can do X or Y." Objective statements are an outdated strategy and are not focused on the employers' needs.*

Employers are looking for something very specific – someone to meet their needs. Address those needs, and think from their perspective, not from yours. Translate your military skills into transferrable skills in the civilian world by accessing the O*NET Online Crosswalk tool. Enter the Military Occupational Classification (MOC) for your current role to find civilian role equivalents. Employers want to fill jobs with the most qualified candidate. Who is the most qualified candidate? You are. Clearly show why that is on the resume. Sell yourself.

summary statement main ideas

- It is sometimes thought of as an edited version of your Professional Value Proposition
- Summary of overall qualifications that support your professional objective.
- Translates your military rank, role and training into transferrable skills so that a civilian recruiter can see your fit for the role they are filling.
- Might include number of years in role or career path, credentials, special training
- NO OBJECTIVE STATEMENT!
- No military terms or jargon that employers will not be familiar with

Example Summary Statement for an Administrative Professional:

- Administrative professional with over ten years of experience supporting the base commander at Brooks City Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX. Acted as first point of contact, triaged incoming calls and emails and managed calendars and meetings requested. Noted for outstanding levels of discretion, professionalism, and service in office administration roles. Recognized for effectively managing ongoing tasks to support base and company commanders to carry out day-to-day operations. Selected for special projects to support deployments, onboarding and transferring of base team-members efficiently. Final rank: Administrative Specialist, Marine Corps. Honorable discharge, March 2020.

Example Summary Statement for Finance Manager:

- Possess 10 years of success in financial management, managing supply, and procurement budgets and facilities and build highly productive staff. Strong track record in working in complex and fast-paced roles, including liaison at extremely busy base operations center. Deep financial acumen lending structure and accountability to day-to-day operations. Final rank was Financial Officer, Marine Corps. Honorable discharge, June 2020.

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Example Summary Statement for IT Project Manager:

- Nine years of experience in project management, specializing in complex IT initiatives. Manage entire lifecycle, from gathering requirements through delivery and post-implementation support. Track record of securing deliverables of six-figure projects on time and below budget. Final rank: Computer Systems Analysts, Enlisted, Navy. Honorable discharge, January 2020.

summary statement template

Here are a few sentence templates and examples of each template that you can use to help you build your summary:

Offer xx years of experience in [insert field] and expertise in [insert specialties]

- Offer nine years of experience in project management and expertise in SDLC, Six Sigma methodologies, and cross-functional leadership.

Successful track record of [insert accomplishments]

- Successful track record of driving cost reduction and efficiency while providing information and resources to people before they even know they need them.

Skilled in building and managing teams to achieve [insert achievements]

- Skilled in building and managing teams to achieve sales targets in highly competitive environments.

Possess more than xx years of experience in roles including [insert previous job titles/functions]

- Possess more than 12 years of experience in roles including database administrator (DBA), programmer/analyst, and systems analyst.

Excel in [insert skills] to deliver [insert results]

- Excel in engaging senior-level professionals, managing key accounts, and guiding complex sales cycles to deliver multimillion-dollar impacts.

This method can be used for any level role, entry-level to CEO.

The **Summary Statement** is very important. The first half of your first page of your resume is the most valuable real estate because that is where people will look, so it's your first opportunity to grab your reader. In this section, you should include the brand of the military you served in, the number of years in the service, your final rank and the date of discharge.

This is where you'll either go into the 'no thank you pile' or they'll keep reading. Don't be fooled into thinking hiring managers and recruiters are reading your entire resume like a good book – they are not. They're skimming it like a small stone in the lake. In fact, studies have shown that the average amount of time spent on whether to decide to keep reading, is only 6 seconds.

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uncover transferable skills.

Whether you're considering a complete career change or just developing your personal brand for your job search, your transferrable skills are one of your strongest assets. Transferrable skills are those that can be applied to a variety of different work environments, situations, and industries. Here's how to assess yours and make them work for you.

hard skills vs. soft skills

Both your hard skills and soft skills can be transferrable. Hard skills are functional and/or technical knowledge and skills, such as specific computer programs, job functions, and deep industry expertise. Soft skills are personal qualities typically related to emotional intelligence, such as leadership abilities, attention to detail, and customer service.

what are transferrable skills?

Transferrable skills can be used in many occupations and transfer easily from job to job. Hiring professionals look for these skills in candidates to determine their potential and overall qualifications for a job. You should always include transferrable skills on your resume.

Career changers can leverage transferrable skills to show they have the sought-after talents that hiring professionals are looking for. Some skills that would benefit any employer: Customer Service, Sales, Negotiation, Training, Managing People, Public Speaking, Coordinating Events, Proofreading/Editing, Administrative Support, Budgeting, Forecasting, Hiring, Reporting, etc.

what is in demand?

Sometimes it can be difficult to acknowledge our own skill sets, so use your target job openings for inspiration. Analyze job qualifications for your target roles to find trends of common personal attributes and skills that employers are asking for. Add the skills to your list that are important for your desired role and track how you've displayed these skills in the past.

selling your skills

Now that you've identified these skills, it's time to put them to work by marketing them effectively. You'll need to show employers instead of telling them - on your resume and in interviews. Instead of saying you have 'great communication skills,' write a flawless resume and cover letter that engages the reader and show off your communication style during interviews. You could say you have project management skills, but it's better if you're able to describe the projects you've managed using quantifiable metrics. Try completing the following worksheet to identify your transferrable skills:

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SKILLS	RELATED ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Leadership ability	Led a cross-functional team of 20 to complete several IT projects that were consistently under budget with on-time delivery; team was awarded as top-performing team company-wide during annual meeting in 2019
Customer service	Received 6 quarterly Customer Service Awards Consistently achieved a 90% customer satisfaction rating, when company standard was 80%
CONTINUE WITH YOUR OWN...	

examples

Use these examples to explore how you might apply these strategies to your own transferrable skills assessment!

Administrative Officer

An Administrative Officer would typically have skills that include scheduling, coordinating meetings and events, arranging travel, developing presentations and reports for key stakeholders/senior leadership, communicating with vendors, ordering supplies, bookkeeping, maintaining records, interfacing with customers, and managing special projects. These can ALL be considered transferrable skills and could be leveraged to segue into a career such as:

- Event Planning or Corporate Travel Management
- Project Coordination, Operations Management, or Logistics
- Accounts Payable/Receivable or Purchasing

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Take It One Step Further

Think about what else is involved in the tasks you perform on a day-to-day or project basis. For example, as part of handling meeting and event coordination, one could be accountable for setting venues, sourcing and negotiating vendor services, seeking out presenters and speakers, coordinating technology needs for conferences and other meetings, determining themes, and managing the event setup and takedown. These are all additional skills that could be used to transition from an Executive Assistant job into a new career as an Event Planner. Types of administrative jobs are also extremely varied and could include a Logistics Analyst, Office Manager, Medical Secretary, Paralegal, or HR Assistant.

Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO)/Senior Enlisted

NCO's are the "Team Leaders" of many organizations/groups. Many companies have "Team Leader" positions, and individuals who hold these types of roles typically have a diverse set of skills that could be applied to many other types of jobs in such areas as management, human resources, and training.

For these individuals in the civilian world, the work space could be anything from a retail floor to a service delivery group, daily responsibilities could include training and development, quality assurance, scheduling workloads, recruiting and hiring, inventory maintenance, customer service, product stocking, reporting, process improvement, presenting/public speaking, project management, program management, personnel management, conflict resolution, budgeting, and cost control.

Depending on the job, there can be many more transferrable skills. These could be leveraged to segue into new careers in targeted areas such as:

- Corporate Training, Human Resources, or Recruiting
- Quality Assurance/Control Management, Operations Management, or Project Management
- Customer Service Management
- Logistics Manager

Officer

Being an Officer means that you are coming with leadership experience on a large scale not always replicated in the civilian world. From overseeing multimillion-dollar budgets to mentoring individuals at various points in their career or to problem solving in fast paced high-pressure environments, your skills are diverse and can be applied to many types of jobs in numerous industries. Due your diverse skills and management experience just some career examples would be:

- Management Rotation Program
- Management Consultant
- Operations Management
- Program Management
- Data Center Management

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Information Assurance/Cyber Security/Information Technology

Software engineering involves many components, including requirements gathering, design, development, testing, implementation, QA, project tracking and reporting, team leadership, training, customer and user interaction, technical documentation, bug fixing, and technical support. Because software engineering can transition into various areas, individuals in this role can segue into careers in areas that include:

- Project Management, Technical Management, Development Operations (DevOps)
- Technical Writing & Editing, Business/Systems Analysis, Test Engineering, QA Engineering
- Service/Solution Delivery, Software Development Management, Consulting

professional value proposition (PVP).

Your Professional Value Proposition (PVP) is a compelling, concise statement conveying your value, unique abilities, and professional brand. You have many skills that are transferrable from military to civilian careers and your PVP is the first step in showcasing your many talents. Your PVP can be used when networking, on your professional branding documents, and to answer the "tell me about yourself" question while interviewing. You can create your PVP in three simple steps:

step 1: think about what makes you valuable

- What makes you marketable? What is your general background overview?
- What do you do that creates value and makes an impact?
- What are your strengths - those things that help you stand out against your competition?
- What evidence do you have that demonstrates those strengths?
- What are you excited about doing in your next role?

step 2: fill in the blanks

I am a _____ professional specializing in _____. My strengths include _____ and _____. I have achieved _____ and _____, and am excited about _____ in my next role.

step 3: put it all together and edit as needed

- Make sure it flows nicely, is easy to understand, and is concise (1-minute tops!).
- Practice delivering it with several different people.
- Make sure you say it with energy and enthusiasm.

examples:

I am an operations management professional specializing in large, complex facilities with a diverse team and multiple moving parts in a 24/7 365 environment. My strengths include talent management, developing comprehensive training programs, and increasing productivity while maintaining a highly efficient, motivated and safe environment. I consistently kept my facilities operating within or below budget standards without sacrificing on quality or delivery. I am excited to share my passion for providing top-notch leadership to a top-notch organization in my next role.

I am a project management professional specializing in large, complex IT initiatives. My strengths include gathering requirements, translating requirements to technical teams, and communicating with stakeholders. I have consistently delivered multimillion-dollar projects on time and below budget, and am excited to achieve quality, cost, delivery, and productivity goals in my next role.

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I am an administrative professional specializing in supporting day-to-day operations for busy executives. I am known as "consider it done Nancy" because of my ability to expedite tasks and manage complicated administrative duties with ease. I have often been selected to assist on special projects for the executive team because of these strengths and am excited to provide top-notch administrative support in my next role.

I am a procurement professional specializing in handling complex negotiations of both time and expenditures across multiple departments and locations around the globe. I pride myself on my ability to anticipate the needs of my team to ensure manpower and equipment arrive at difficult destinations on time and below budget. Through passion and communication, I have been able to cultivate cross-functional relationships that have been essential to my success. I am interesting building new relationships, tackling new challenges, and continuing to gain new skills in my next role.

I am a marketing professional with deep experience in community relations and event management. My strengths include managing multiple concurrent projects to meet client and corporate expectations. I have achieved success through my ability to increase sales, build brand awareness, and promote a company's image and am interested in additional challenges and responsibilities in my next role.

I am a maintenance professional specializing in the technical support of daily operations. With a passion for "rolling up my sleeves", I enjoy hands on work that allows me the ability discover and troubleshoot various equipment issues. My strengths include being a fast learner, natural leader, and problem solver. I am excited to bring my talent and expertise to my next role and continue to gain new skills.

conducting 20-minute networking meetings.

Networking is one of the most important tools you will have in your job search arsenal. How do you identify potential network contacts? First, look at who you know both professionally and personally. Second, think about what you know about them: similar skill sets, their transition from military personnel to civilian work, company/industry interests, and who they may know. Third, reach out to those superiors with whom you built a report; chances are they will be just as willing to help you be successful on the other side.

After you identify your networking contacts it's time to start networking. You can use LinkedIn to connect with them, you can call them or email them, or you can request a 20-minute networking meeting with them. This last idea is RiseSmart's recommendation: whenever possible, use the networking meeting to start new relationships as well as nurture old ones.

Below is an outline of how a 20-minute networking meeting should be structured. For more information, including example conversations, check out the book The 20 Minute Networking Meeting: How Little Meetings Can Lead to Your Next Big Job by Marcia Ballinger and Nathan Perez. As you have these meetings, keep in mind that it is important to be prepared, respect peoples' time, and be both thankful and gracious.

step 1

First Impression (2-3 minutes). Arrive early, make light conversation with the gatekeeper, thank them, chitchat, and set the meeting agenda.

step 2

Introduction (1 minute). Give your Professional Value Proposition (PVP).

step 3

Discussion (12-15 minutes). Have five questions prepared for the meeting:

question 1 - 3: Ask up to three tailored questions and take notes. Here are some examples:

- I noticed on your LinkedIn profile that you keep very up-to-date with professional development. Which activities have had the most ROI for your career growth? Are there any you might recommend for as I begin transition?
- I noticed on LinkedIn that you spent 5 years in management consulting before moving into your current role. What was it like moving into, and out of, consulting? Would you recommend it?

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- I know that you previously worked for ABC Company, and I've been exploring opportunities with them. Would you recommend them as an employer? Do you have any insight into their unspoken preferences for job candidates?
- I am considering entering the reserves; how receptive has ABC Company been at accommodating the time needed to continue my military career?

question 4: Ask what you can do for them. Here are some examples:

- Thank you, Jim, for being so helpful. Now, how can I help you?
- If you think of anything I can help you with please let me know. As a token of my appreciation for your time, I printed out this Harvard Business Review study on combining engineering teams during a merger - I thought it might be helpful to you given your company's current M&A activity.

question 5: Request an introduction. Here are some examples:

- Do you know of anyone from your work on the ABC conference who might be a good connection for me? May I reference your name?
- I noticed you have a great network from your time at ABC. Would you be able to recommend someone there to whom I can speak?

step 4

Ending (2 minutes): End the meeting on time, thank them again, and ask to keep in touch.

- Thank you so much, Sarah, for your time, I know you are busy, so will let you get back to your day. Thank you again for offering to introduce me to Paul. It will be great to meet him. I will send that vendor contact list to you tomorrow as promised.
- My time is up, Sam. You have been such a huge help. Thank you for meeting with me. To recap, I will send you the email address of that programming contractor I know. I think he can be a great help to you on your upcoming project. I am grateful that you will keep your ears open for potential positions or contracting jobs for me!

step 5

Follow up: Send a thank you, continue to offer value, and keep in touch.

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SMART Stories in detail for technology.

Networking SMART Stories help you communicate your expertise and experience in a concise and relevant format while illustrating the specifics of your previous accomplishments. Leveraging the SMART Stories strategy centers on developing interview answers that are impactful, relevant, and position-focused. Using SMART Stories as part of your interview strategy will position you as someone who is a strong fit for a position and will add immediate value to an organization. When constructing SMART Stories make sure to use language that is universal and not specific to the military.

how is a SMART Story constructed?

S STANDS FOR "SITUATION": Start by outlining the situation behind your story.

M STANDS FOR "METRICS" OR "MORE": This second part gives you the opportunity to expand your story with concrete details and scope, including any obstacles, conflicts, or difficulties you encountered.

A STANDS FOR "ACTION": List the specific actions you took.

R STANDS FOR "RESULTS": Describe the exact results you achieved. Quantifiable results that use data are always more effective and memorable, so be certain to use numbers, dollars, percentages, productivity, and comparisons in your description. Feel free to share any accolades or praise you received as well.

T STANDS FOR "TIE-IN": The final stage is to bring the message home that you are the ideal candidate for the position by tying your accomplishments directly to the expressed needs of your future employer.

topics

Topics for SMART Stories can be related to key accomplishments, such as saving money, saving time, increasing productivity, landing a new client, managing a large project, handling budget issues, working with specific customer issues, developing a new product, or finishing projects efficiently. Remember to highlight your transferable skills in your SMART Stories as well.

The options for topics are limitless, with the goal of tying your SMART Story to an employer's need.

Create SMART Stories that demonstrate:

- Every skill and ability highlighted in your PVP Statement and the competencies/skills listed in your resume

- Each major responsibility in the job description of a position

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- How you learn quickly (adapt to new environment/culture/processes) in case there is a skill/experience the new employer needs that you don't possess

- Times you set your manager or peers up for success to demonstrate cooperation at all levels

SMART story examples:

question: Tell me about a weakness.

answer: I was very overconfident when I stepped into my first role which can be a benefit but also had a dramatic impact on my ability to form relationships with peers and stakeholders.

Learning to take a step back, open my eyes and ears accept that I did not know everything helped dramatically to improve my peer relationships and increase my productivity throughout the organization. In addition, with the right level of confidence and knowledge I was selected to act as mentor to the newest members of our teams.

question: Tell me about a time you turned around a tough situation.

answer: There was a time in my last position during which the product validation process was costing the department significantly. It was at a breaking point and required a complete overhaul. Validation was slow on individual SKUs and not everything was going through testing.

I developed and launched an automation program for validation of more than 100 product SKUs daily while increasing functional coverage to 100%. The program was highly customized to meet the intricate needs of this process and took about six weeks from ideation to initial rollout. It was immediately refined and fully adopted due to those early successes. Now everything was getting validated and it was an accurate and efficient process. Within six months, we were able to start work on the next project – a full four months ahead of schedule.

Following this success, I worked closely with a cross-functional committee that looked at automation opportunities in other departments. Together, we were able to plan and implement three additional actions immediately that saved both time and money. I looked forward to bringing that type of ingenuity and sharing to this position.

question: Tell me about a time you improved a process.

answer: When I joined my previous organization, product development and testing was inefficient, and the department wasn't meeting the desired timelines for new releases. The average cycle time was ____ days with ____ engineers, including multiple geographically dispersed teams.

One of my first initiatives was to identify the best tools to improve efficiencies, then propose these ideas to the leadership team and gain buy-in from the key stakeholders. Once given the green light, I was asked to co-lead the department-wide efforts of this high-volume operation in order to ensure zero negative impact on existing projects.

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The results were significant. We reduced release times 10% and decreased customer reported bugs 30%. While ensuring the success of these efforts, I was also the key point of contact for the internal organization and our customers. I look forward to bringing my focus on process and quality improvement to increase efficiency and performance on a continual basis.

build a collection of effective smart stories

Follow these recommendations:

Create 10-12 concise stories (the more, the better).

If a story is from a long time ago, do not time-stamp it: avoid language such as "A long time ago" or "Back when things were done without computers" or "About 10 years ago." If it was recent, time-stamp it by saying "Recently" or "Earlier this year" or even "When the new planning technology emerged this spring..."

Practice your SMART Stories once a day until you land. Say the Stories out loud to understand how voice inflection, tempo, and word choice influences the effectiveness of the message.

After an interview, identify any real or perceived gaps between what the hiring company needs and what you offer. Create a story to fill that gap and use it as part of a thank you letter, a follow up note, or in preparation for the next round of interviews with the company.

Highlight the result when delivering stories. Think about the impact of that result. For example, did you create a process/policy that saved time/money and is it still being used today? Was there a long-term impact as demonstrated in the above example?

Avoid using the word "we" with SMART Stories. Refer to "the company," "the organization," or "the department." It is a subtle way to distinguish yourself from the origin of the problem/challenge/initiative and conveys you are a "free agent" now and not too attached/aligned to your former employer.

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