

# THE PHARMACEUTICAL SALES RESUME

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The pharmaceutical sales resume is the most important job-search document. The resume will present and introduce your most important experiences, skills, education, and training to prospective pharmaceutical companies. Your resume will meet staffing and human resource personnel before you can personally meet them during an interview. It is the first impression that a pharmaceutical employer gets of you. Your resume serves as a spokesperson, an advocate, and your personal advertisement. It will be, in most cases, your ticket to a pharmaceutical sales interview.

The goal will be to write a resume that strategically presents your major selling points to prospective pharmaceutical companies and networking contacts. Many pharmaceutical sales applicants simply throw down their information on a piece of paper with no rhyme or reason. A strong resume will identify your major selling points which can be intentionally accentuated using a formatted style. It is important to understand the common resume components and formatting styles for a successful resume to be written.

The nature of a resume is very subjective with thousands of human resource and staffing professionals in the pharmaceutical industry. No two staffing professionals perceive resumes exactly the same way. Therefore, a fundamental point to remember is that there is no absolute right or wrong way when it comes to writing the resume. Human resource professionals naturally have biases toward certain formats and styles. As an applicant, you need to decide which style is ultimately best for you with consideration of your experiences and education.

## **BASIC TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL RESUME**

As you start to identify what you want to include on your resume, keep the following tips in mind. First, your resume should look good at first glance. Your pharmaceutical resume will make your first impression to the pharmaceutical company. What the pharmaceutical recruiters view on your resume is how they will decide whether you are right for this position. If your resume is not electronically friendly then they will dismiss you quickly. If your resume was printed on a cheap paper, you are considered cheap in the staffing professionals mind. If your resume is not detailed, then you are not detail-oriented. If your resume is overloaded and long, then the recruiter will assume you are long-winded and unorganized. Print your resume on good, cotton-bond paper while also keeping it electronic and database friendly. Balance your resume by having enough space and not too much text. Always use a good, quality laser printer when printing the resumes.

Your most important experiences and skills must be clearly listed on your resume for pharmaceutical employers to see. Use highlighting, spacing, indentation, and bulleted statements to make it easy for the recruiters to find the information that is important to them. If a pharmaceutical staffer has to look too long and too hard for information, they will stop looking. Emphasize your important skill sets as it relates to pharmaceutical sales and present them in a way that stands out.

Finally, pay close attention accuracy and attention to detail. Automated spell checking does not always find everything. One mistake can take you out of the running for a particular job or company. At most pharmaceutical companies, if you misspell or misuse a word, you can kiss your chances goodbye. Spelling errors indicate that you do not pay attention to detail and you are not reliable.

## **THE COMPONENTS OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL RESUME**

Remember, there are no absolute rights or wrongs to writing a pharmaceutical sales resume. Some items are optional and whether to include them depends on you situation and the level of the sales position you are pursuing. However, there are many components of a resume that are recommended. We will describe the various parts of a pharmaceutical resume and tell you what is recommended and which should be considered optional. We will also describe the differences that exist between the entry-level and the experienced resume since different pharmaceutical sales resumes require different elements. We will also present to you where to put the various items on your resume.

It is good to have a basic understanding of the differences between entry-level and experienced resumes components. Entry-level resumes contain less work experience and accomplishments that do experienced resumes. Most entry-level resumes start off with the education section and are restricted in length to one page. Experienced pharmaceutical sales resumes often begin with the past work experience and then present more of the skill sets. A two page pharmaceutical resume would be acceptable for an experienced applicant. Due to lack of experience, entry level resumes present a wide range of other skills such as: academic projects, volunteer and extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, certifications, and internships. While experienced pharmaceutical resumes list full-time work experience as the main type of experience.

### **HEADING**

#### **Recommended**

Starting at the top of your resume, your heading should consist of your full name, mailing address, phone number(s), and email address. This information is typically centered, as shown in our Heading sample below. Notice that the name is one size larger than the contact information. If you are working while doing your job search, you should decide whether if it is appropriate to put your work phone number on your resume. For college

students, we recommend that you enter your campus address and phone number as well as your permanent address and phone number.

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Heading Sample 1:

**Inita G. Pharmajob**

381 Burberry Lane  
Walnut Creek, CA 93218  
203-555-1212  
[inita@careerjob.com](mailto:inita@careerjob.com)

Heading Sample 2:

**Inita G Pharmajob**

Current address  
1753 Campus Hall  
College Station, PA 12964  
473-652-1278  
[inita@careerjob.com](mailto:inita@careerjob.com)

Permanent address  
671 Woodchase  
New York, NY 10012  
(212) 555-1234

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## **OBJECTIVE**

### **Recommended**

If you are preparing an entry-level pharmaceutical sales resume, it is important to show that you have a good sense of direction. If you are an experienced professional, you may start with a Summary of Qualifications. The summary of qualifications is described in the next section. If you choose to put an objective on your resume, pharmaceutical recruiters overwhelmingly want to see a descriptive and focused objective. Do not make the common mistake of presenting a lot of fluff or nonsense in the Objective. There really are not many applicants out there who seek a non-challenging position with a low-class company, where they are not able to use their skills and where there is no chance of promotion. It is important for you to write your objective by keeping the pharmaceutical staffing professional in mind as they typically look for one thing: the position you desire.

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Objective example:

Too-Much-Fluff objective:

To obtain a challenging position in a top-notch company where I am able to use my skills and advance within the company.

Objective sample:

Good objective:

To obtain a sales position within the pharmaceutical industry.

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## **SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Optional**

This section is recommended only for those applicants that have substantial skills and work experience relating to their desired job. If it is used, the Summary of Qualifications should be placed near the top of the resume. The summary should contain bulleted statements of facts only. Opinion typically will carry very little weight. Below you will find a distinction between an opinion-oriented summary and a fact-oriented one.

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Summary example:

#### Opinion-Oriented Summary of Qualifications

- Excellent communication and organizational skills
- Good problem solving skills
- Ability to multi-task
- Strong work ethic and detail oriented

Summary example:

#### Fact-Oriented Summary of Qualifications

- National Certification— CNPR™ Number (list your number)
  - Eight years of consistently exceeding sales goals
  - Public-speaking skills: Took place in a 1 week public speaking seminar
  - Excellent computer skills: Use Powerpoint presentations weekly
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## **EDUCATION OR TRAINING**

### **Recommended**

If you are an entry-level applicant, especially a recent college graduate, you should place your Education section immediately after the Objective section. If you are an experienced candidate, you will probably want to place this section at the end of your pharmaceutical resume, since your work experience is more pertinent. The Education section is recommended but some of the parts are optional. Below you will find details on the parts that are recommended and those that are optional.

### **Recommended Items:**

The following items are recommended with the Education section for your pharmaceutical sales resume:

- Schools/Colleges: Name, location (city/town and state only)
- Degrees, Licenses, and Certifications
- Majors, Minors and Specifications

In the education area, list your NAPS<sup>®</sup> training exactly as follows:

- Graduate of NAPS<sup>®</sup>'s Pharmacology/Pharmaceutical Sales Training Program
- CNP<sup>®</sup> Number (list your number)

### **Optional Items:**

Many sections in the Education section of your pharmaceutical sales resume are optional. Whether you decide to put them on your resume depends on your situation. The question you should answer is, "How does putting this on my pharmaceutical sales resume benefit me?" Below you will find two of the most common items pharmaceutical sales job seekers ponder over whether to include them on their resume.

#### *Grade Point Average(GPA)*

A big pharmaceutical resume debate is whether or not to include your GPA in the education section. If you are an experienced applicant, you will probably want to leave your GPA off your resume, since your experience and skills overshadow your academic record. If you are an entry-level candidate, the rule of thumb is to include it only if it is above a 3.0.

#### *Relevant Course Work*

Relevant course work is only beneficial if you are an entry level applicant and the courses are pharmacology, medical, scientific, marketing or sales related. If you are a history major, you will still qualify for a pharmaceutical sales position but you need not emphasize your history coursework. The example below exemplifies an education section that includes both GPA and relevant coursework.

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Bachelor of Arts, May 2005  
Albion College, Albion, MI  
Major: History  
Minor: Political Science  
GPA: 3.2

Relevant Coursework: Clinical Pharmacology, Marketing and Chemistry

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## **EXPERIENCE**

### **Recommended**

The experience section is recommended and is really required for all resumes. Pharmaceutical recruiters are very interested in seeing what kind of work experience you may have and how it relates to pharmaceutical sales. If you are an entry-level applicant, you need to place your Experience section after your Education section and the opposite if you are experienced.

Each experience will include up to six parts: organization name, location, position title, beginning and end date, responsibilities/duties, and accomplishments. The first four parts are recommended for all job listings—company name, location, position, dates. With the latter two, they depend on the level, substance, relevance and nature of the experience. It also depends on how many other experiences you may want to include on your pharmaceutical sales resume.

While results and accomplishments are important to express on a resume, they typically are much more effective for experienced job applicants. These pharmaceutical applicants have had much more time to build a list of accomplishments and achievements than others. Take a look at the experience highlighted on the following salesperson's resume: (Understand that 30% of entry-level pharmaceutical reps hired have no sales experience at all.)

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**SALES REPRESENTATIVE** - Pitney Bowes, Jonesboro, AR  
March 2003 - Present

Consistently exceeded company and local market quotas while managing a territory that consisted of more 500 vendors.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- President's Club Award Winner, 2003-2004

- Won 2003 company-wide sales incentive trip to Cancun, Mexico
  - Top Sales Rep for Jonesboro—2003-2004
  - Won regional sales contest trip to San Diego, CA – 2004
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Notice the results-oriented approach of this experienced sales person. When you have good results and awards, do not shy away from them. The more you show it to potential pharmaceutical employers, the better off you are. Do not force accomplishments or embellish facts about yourself. It may look forced and the pharmaceutical recruiter may question your honesty.

### **Various Types of Experience**

Understand that there are many types of experience you can include on your pharmaceutical resume. Many job applicants think of experience solely as work experience, but this is just not true. Just because you were paid does not necessarily mean the experience is substantial enough to impress a pharmaceutical recruiter. For many pharmaceutical applicants, volunteer work, unpaid internships, and community service have had a greater impact on their career than their paid experiences. Below you will find five subcategories of experience and a sample of each as well as where these categories should be placed on your pharmaceutical resume.

#### *Work Experience*

Work experiences are simply those experiences for which you are paid. If you are an entry-level job seeker, part-time and summer jobs are perfectly acceptable as work experiences. Experienced job applicants will obviously include their full-time positions held before.

#### *Voluntary/Community Service*

Pharmaceutical recruiters like to see that you get involved in your community. It shows that you are active and not solely driven by money. If have not been involved up to this point, it is never too late. There are many thousands of volunteer organizations that need help. Below you will find an example of how community service can be presented on a resume.

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### **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

- Cook County Toastmaster Club: Performed speaking duties for club  
2002-Present
- Diabetes Walk-a-thon: Team Leader  
2003-2004

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### *Extracurricular Activities*

Extracurricular activities are much more prevalent and important to present on resumes for entry-level applicants. Experienced professionals should focus more on full-time positions and community service. Pharmaceutical recruiters can differentiate club membership from active involvement in an association. The value of the activity is placed on those who have obtained a leadership position, or was involved in coordinating an event or engaged in a project. Below is a good example of how extracurricular activities should be listed:

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#### **PRESIDENT**—Kappa Alpha Delta—Springfield College, 2004-2005

- Ran weekly meetings and enforced policies and rules
- Managed operations for this national service sorority which consisted of 30 members
- Oversaw approximately 6 committees

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### *Internships*

Internships, cooperative education, student teaching, clinical experience or field preceptorships are all forms of hands-on training. These experiences usually are very relevant if related to the medical or pharmaceutical industry. Internships are extremely important for recent college graduates. They serve as an effective way for students to receive relevant experience and skills.

Pharmaceutical recruiters perceive internships as “a great and vital characteristic for entry level applicants.” They want to see that the applicant performed duties and responsibilities that a full-time professional would perform. Some internships are better than others. It is important to describe the specifics of projects you have worked on and any results that were generated. It is also good to reveal with whom you may have worked with. The staffing professional wants to see if you have experience working in a team environment.

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#### Internship-Field Preceptorship—Fielding Pharmaceuticals, Atlanta, GA

- Performed ride-alongs with 2 different pharmaceutical sales reps
  - Listened carefully as reps detailed physicians
  - Help organize drug sampling brochures
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### *Academic Experience*

Academic experience is the most under-utilized type of experience on a pharmaceutical sales resume. Academic experiences are projects, case studies, international study, laboratory experiments, field studies, and research. Some of the most substantive, enlightening experiences are academic in nature. However, most job applicants either completely overlook them or do mention them enough. Pharmaceutical job applicants have been conditioned to believe that pharmaceutical work experience is the only real experience that belongs on a resume. This is just not true.

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### **SALES REPRESENTATIVE—Konica Copiers, 2004-Present**

- Was ranked #3 out of 122 sales representatives in my territory.
  - Responsible for soliciting new accounts plus managed all public school accounts.
  - Was voted rep of the month in November 2004
  - Was first in 2004 for number of new accounts opened.
- 

### **SKILLS**

#### **Recommended**

There are typically three types of skills that are widely included on a resume: computer skills, language skills, and relevant/training. Skills can be found in various places on a resume. They can also be put into the Summary of Qualifications section, or they can be presented in their own section, called Summary of Skills, Relevant Skills, or Professional Training. They can even be split into more than one section, such as Selling Skills or Computer Skills. The strength, amount, and relevancy of your skills dictate where they are placed and how much they are emphasized. Below are some samples of how these skills can be presented on a pharmaceutical sales resume.

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#### **Computer Skills:**

- Experience using Microsoft Office (Excel, Word, Access, PowerPoint) and the Internet

#### **Professional Training:**

- CNPR # xxxxxxxxxx, Dale Carnegie Sales Training, Completed  
Pharmacology/Medical Training through the NAPSR

## **Language Skills:**

- Proficient in speaking and writing French, lived in Paris in 2003.
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## **HONORS AND AWARDS**

### **Recommended**

Do not underestimate the importance of honors and awards. Many applicants believe that the awards and honor societies they received are not that big of a deal. Pharmaceutical staffing professionals do not think that way. Any honor or award you have won should go on your pharmaceutical sales resume. You never know which of these things on your resume will make a difference or get you noticed. Pharmaceutical recruiters are unique and they do value different things. Putting an award or honor on your resume gives it a chance to be recognized.

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### **Honors and Awards:**

- Dean's List (7 semesters)
  - President of the National Collegiate Marketing Society
  - Alumni Fellowship Scholarship Award
  - National Honors Program
  - Kappa Delta Gamma—National Honor Society
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## **INTERESTS AND HOBBIES**

### **Optional**

Interests and hobbies are optional, yet they can be a great addition to your pharmaceutical sales resume. They tell a pharmaceutical staffer more about you as a person and may help personalize you and make you less of a “number.” If you have the space, you should add this section to the resume. However, use good judgment in what you include. Political or religious activities, for example, can rub someone the wrong way. On the other side, your hobby in golf may be the staffing professionals favorite pastime as well.

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### **Interests and Hobbies:**

- Golf, Foreign Travel, Military History, Scuba Diving, Reading, Physical Fitness
  - Member of the Military Athletic Association
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## **PROFESSIONAL/TRADE ASSOCIATIONS**

### **Recommended**

If you belong to a professional or trade association (obviously for NAPSRS members), it is highly recommended that you put them on your resume. Be sure to highlight any involvement you have had in your organizations. Below you will find some samples.

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#### **Professional Organizations:**

- Member of the National Association of Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives (NAPSRS)
  - Member of the National Marketing Association
  - Member of the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity (Social Chairman 2003)
  - American College Golf Association (Served as Chairman 2002)
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## **REFERENCES**

If you are creating an entry-level resume, you may have left room for references. However, you should not bother listing them. A list of references is vital to your job search but should not be included on your pharmaceutical sales resume. Your resume space is too precious so include your references on a separate page. We recommend use the statement "References available upon request" on the resume. You should always have your list of references with you at all times so you can provide them when asked.

## **PHARMACEUTICAL SALES RESUME FACTORS**

We have provided a lot of ideas and recommendations for your pharmaceutical sales resume but remember that there are no obsoletes when it comes to resumes. However, there are some definite positive and negative factors that applicants should keep in mind.

#### Positive:

- Always make the pharmaceutical resume easy to review
- Absolutely make sure it is accurate
- Present strong and relevant content
- Make sure it is eye appealing

#### Negative:

- Include an objective that is unfocused
- Present personal information, such as health, gender, and marital status

- Use “I”
- List references on the resume

<b>SUMMARY ON HOW TO CONSTRUCT A SUCCESSFUL PHARMACEUTICAL SALES RESUME</b>
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- The main goal of a pharmaceutical sales resume is to present your selling point to prospective pharmaceutical sales employers.
- The components that are highly recommended are education, experience and skills.
- The nature of a pharmaceutical sales resume is very subjective and there are no absolute rights or wrongs.
- An objective is recommended as long as it is focused on concise and mentions your goal of finding a pharmaceutical sales career.
- Honors, interests, presentations, publications, and trade associations are additional components that should be included if you have more than one of each.
- Overall, you want your pharmaceutical sales resume to be easy to review, completely accurate, and descriptive and appealing to a pharmaceutical staffing professional.

Jane Doe  
Goodwill@aaa.com  
Cell: 555.555.7897  
2517 Pharma Road  
Schaumburg, IL 60173  
Home: 557.555.3513

OBJECTIVE: Seeking a **pharmaceutical sales** position.

#### PROFILE

Energetic, tenacious, and goal oriented outside **sales** professional with solid qualifications in account management and customer relations. Proven ability to develop new business and increase **sales** within established accounts and mature territories. Persuasive communicator and assertive negotiator with strong deal closing abilities. Excellent time management skills with outstanding administrative skills; well organized; and computer literate.

#### AREAS OF STRENGTH

- Strongly self motivated, enthusiastic with the ability to work independently, and as a team contributor. Sharp, innovative; passionately enjoys the challenge of outside **sales**; willing to travel.
- A multi-tasked decision maker, resourceful, extremely reliable, hard working, and honest. Exceptional communication; listening, analytical and presentation skills.
- Committed to professional excellence; a quick learner; proven ability to adapt quickly to change.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE Rubbermaid/Newell Products Division 08/01-08/03

**Sales Representative:** Chicago, IL 2002 Central Region

Outstanding **Sales** Achievement Award 2003 Outstanding 1st Qtr **Sales** Representative

- Ranked top **sales** representative in the region for 3 consecutive quarters. Increased territory **sales** by 40% and exceeded quotas by building promotional opportunities.
- Introduced new product launchings, promotions and utilized comprehensive product knowledge and enthusiastic personality to gain rapport with buyers and key decision makers.
- Analyzed consumer needs in retail accounts by identifying issues, tracking trends. Delivered fact-based selling features and tools in order to gain additional linear footage.
- Reset stores to POGs providing variety, value and customer appeal in the latest market offerings. Gained additional presentation by advising clients of features and sale rankings.
- Utilized financial data to manage to maximize business opportunities, while tracking market trends. Responsible for 7 of the 12 independent food chain grocer subgroups for the Chicagoland Area.
- Provided excellent service and follow-up.

The Kroger Company 07/00-08/01

Training and Recruitment Coordinator: Indianapolis, IN

- Recruited & trained management personnel and entry-level trainees.
- Coached Store Managers and trainers in an effective manner.
- Developed and managed \$2.5 M annual training budget, annual college recruiting calendar and managed relationships with university staff.
- Supported Marketing Area Merchandisers in introducing training programs and worked with them toward successful program implementations. 09/98-07/00 Co-Manager & Zone Coordinator: Indianapolis, IN Won the 2000 Central Marketing Area Zone 1 Safety Award.
- Co-chaired various work-related fund-raisers and community involvement (March-of-Dimes, Riley Hospital, School 46, Gleaners Food Drive, and Diabetes Walk-a-thon).

EDUCATION Columbia College: Chicago, IL August 1998 honors graduate GPA: 3.7 Bachelor of Arts:

Business Management Minor: Fashion Management/Merchandising

Studied abroad in Toronto, Canada and San Juan, Puerto Rico

QUALITY REFERENCES READILY AVAILABLE