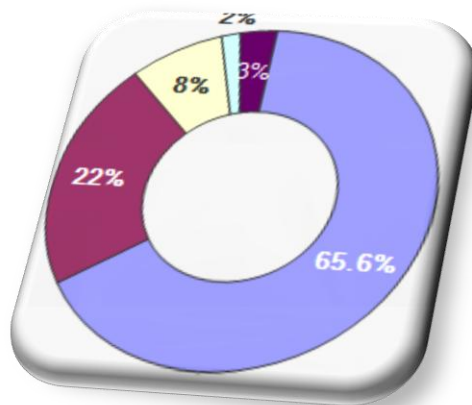




The Wright Career Solution

Results of the 2010 Canadian Resume & Interview Trends Survey



Conducted by

The Wright Career Solution

Moving your career forward...one step at a time

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OVERVIEW

With the unemployment rate in Canada hovering at around 8 percent, there is much pressure on job seekers and hiring managers to get resumes in the “yes” pile. The challenge for these two groups is that they don’t seem to speak the same language. Job seekers create resumes laden with job descriptive statements, while hiring managers are looking for resumes laden with value!

Between August and September, 2010, The Wright Career Solution conducted a survey of hiring managers, recruiters and HR professionals across Canada to get their views on Canadian resume and interview trends. Approximately 192 individuals participated in the survey. The specific intent was to find out what these professionals look for in a resume, preferred length and format, how to handle gaps and over-qualification in the resume, the importance of cover letters and to find out the top five interview questions that a candidate should answer. They were also asked for their **one** resume advice for internationally educated professionals looking for work.

Appreciation

We appreciate the time and effort that respondents put into answering the 20 questions. Their frank responses and insightful commentaries have provided information and advice that job seekers, career professionals and those involved in hiring, will find useful as they navigate the sometimes challenging job search process. We also appreciate and thank those who distributed the survey through their various networks.

Key Findings

The survey was distributed via social media, newsletter and email. Because of the open-ended nature of the survey distribution, the number of people who actually received the survey is not known and it is impossible to generalize from the results. However, findings do indicate that the survey captured responses across a wide breadth of its intended target group. Also, based on the number of individuals who requested a copy of the results, it is safe to conclude that respondents came from a wide cross-section of Canadian companies and organizations. Of the 192 participants, 57.8% said that they are directly responsible for the hiring decisions at their companies, 25% indicated they were recruiters, and 17.2% either said “No”, or that they were part of the hiring process.

- 48.3% feel that a two-page résumé is preferable although 26.6% indicated the length depends on the level of the position.
- 56.3% prefer a summary statement or profile paragraph rather than an ‘objective’ statement.
- 54.7% said the chronological format (reverse date order of employment) is best.
- 78.1% wish to receive resumes as attachments in an email.
- 65.6% use social media in their search for job candidates.
- More than 48% indicated they use a scanning or a database system to manage resumes, reinforcing the value of having a *keywords* component.

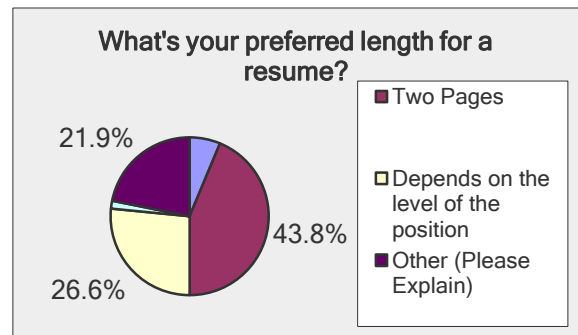
The complete questionnaire and tabulated results are included as **Appendix I**.

THE BREAKDOWN

Résumé length

There were varying reactions to what is the preferred length for a resume. Most of the respondents (43.8%) said they preferred a two-page resume, while 26.6% said it depends on the level of the position.

A number of respondents (21.9%) chose 'Other'. Some said a one-page resume is acceptable for an entry level position, two pages for technical / professional and three or more pages for PhD / MD level only. Some recruiters indicated that they prefer a longer resume as it enables them to see the breadth of the person's experience and are better able to identify the skills relevant to the position they are trying to fill. However, these same recruiters say that clients/employers prefer a 2- or 3-page resume, and they would modify them to suit the client's needs.

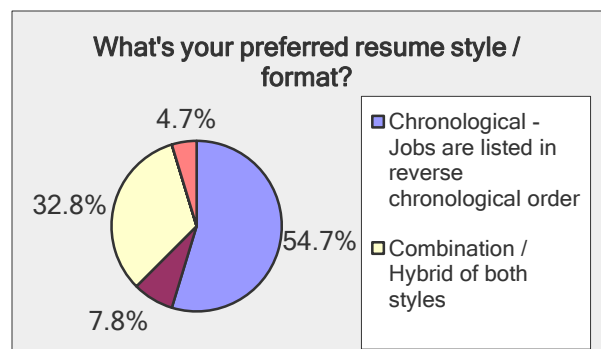


One recruiter commented, *"As we are placing the candidates to our clients we prefer the longer version for details but we don't like to send that to the client, unless specifically requested."*

Preferred Resume Format/Style

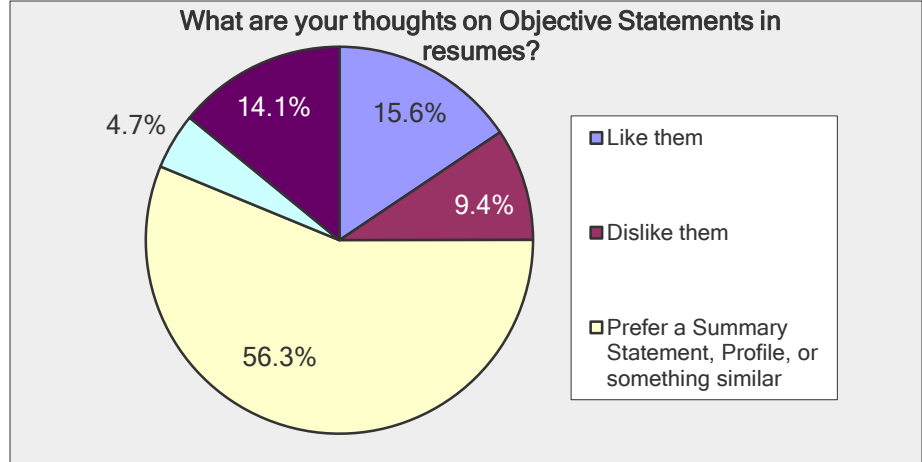
Fifty-four percent (54.7%) of respondents prefer a chronological resume, approximately thirty-three percent (32.8%) prefer a combination/hybrid format, and eight percent (7.8%) favored functional or skills-based resumes with headings that relate to the position.

The consensus on chronological resume is that it makes it easier for hiring managers to see very quickly where the candidate has worked and where they acquired the related experience. Some respondents indicated that when they see a functional resume, they immediately feel that the candidate is hiding something, but more telling is the fact they are unable to decipher where the particular experience was acquired.



Objective Statements

Fifty-six percent (56.3%) of respondents prefer some form of summary statement or a profile over an objective statement, while 15.6% like to see an objective. Some comments from the 14.1% of those who chose 'Other' include:



- “It rarely helps, often hurts, and always takes up valuable real estate that could be better used to showcase your accomplishments.”
- “...they are artificial...”
- “redundant...”
- “should be a one liner reflecting the position, or the reference or job number...”
- “As I reflect on the hundreds of resumes I have seen, I can’t remember this statement being the big reason I was impressed with the resume’. Generally, it was felt that an objective statement, if used, should be a quick overview of one’s capability, not one’s personal objective.”

Respondents were asked if their company use a scanning or database system to manage resumes. Forty-eight percent (48.4%) said they did for all positions, while twenty-five percent (25.0%) said they did not, and do not plan to do so. A very small percent said that, while they use a scanning system for short-listing purposes, they do not rely entirely on a ‘parsing’ program.

Video Resumes

In this social media era, more job seekers are showcasing their abilities beyond the traditional paper resume, and some have been creating videos as part of their marketing efforts. While this is becoming more common, thirty-nine percent (39.1%) of respondents do not accept video resumes and probably would not, while twenty-eight percent (28.1%) indicated they would research the implications of video before making a decision.

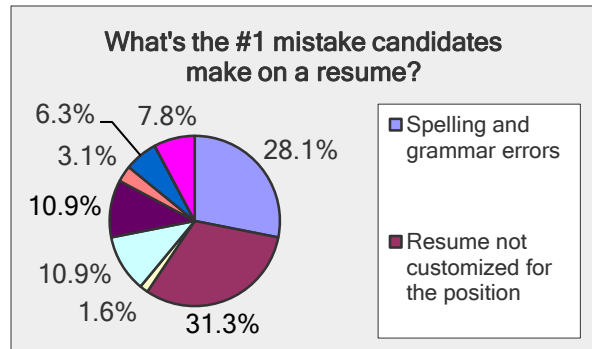
Only three percent (3.1%) accepted video resumes and plan to accept them in the future.

Approximately twelve percent (12.5%) felt that it is appropriate for creative roles, and for marketing and communications positions. Also, besides accepting video resumes, they would request a printed resume as well.

Resume Mistakes

Respondents identified two big resume mistakes that candidates make – resumes not customized for the position (31.3%) and spelling and grammar errors (28.1%).

Lack of accomplishments and unprofessional formatting were identified by eleven percent (10.9%) of the respondents and six percent (6.3%) mentioned lying.



Resume Pet Peeves

This question was one of the open-ended ones, so the answers varied widely. However, the majority indicated their pet peeves to be: resumes not tailored to suit the job requirements, do not match the job, are too generic, have more than three pages, poor formatting, and spelling and grammar errors. **See Appendix III** for a selected list.

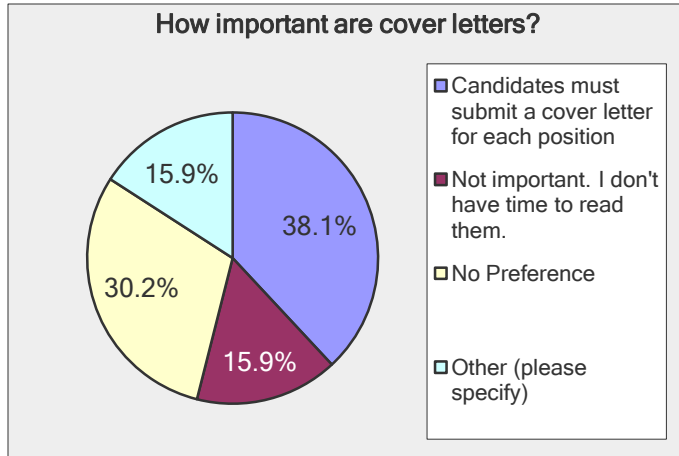
Methods of Receiving Resumes

Sixty-four percent (64.1%) prefer receiving resumes as attachments within an email. Almost nineteen percent (18.8%) indicated that resumes dropped off in person with a follow-up phone call to confirm receipt was their preference, while twelve percent (12.5%) had no preferences. None of the respondents liked to receive resumes that are copied and pasted in the body of an email.

Cover Letters

How important are cover letters?

The importance of cover letters is often a matter of debate among hiring managers, job seekers, professional resume writers, and other career professionals. Some have said that only fifty percent of recruiters read cover letters, which begs the question: What about the other fifty percent? In this survey, thirty eight percent (38.1%) said candidates must submit a cover letter for each application while thirty percent (30.2%) had no preference.

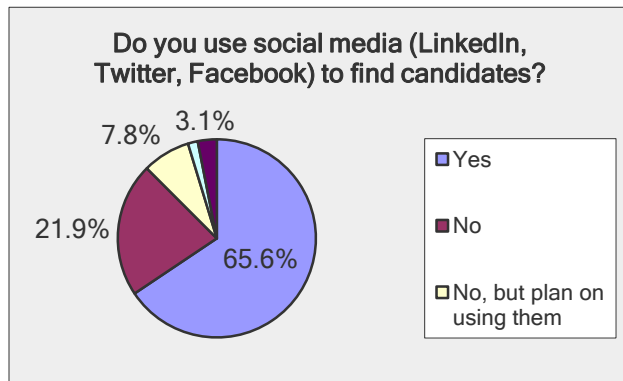


Approximately sixteen percent (15.9%) said they could be useful for information not included on the resume if they add value. In terms of the length of a cover letter, half of the respondents (50%) have a preference for a one-page cover letter, while thirty-seven percent (37.5%) said they would accept a half page.

When asked how best to address the cover letter if a name is not provided, approximately twenty-seven percent (26.6%) had no preference, twenty-two percent (21.9%) mentioned that it would be best to use *Dear Hiring Manager*, approximately 16 percent (15.6%) suggested candidates should call the company to find the name, use *Attention Hiring Manager* or at least have a title. A surprising number of respondents (18.8%) suggested “Dear Sir/Madam” and eleven percent (10.9%) indicated “To Whom it May Concern” if a name was not provided.

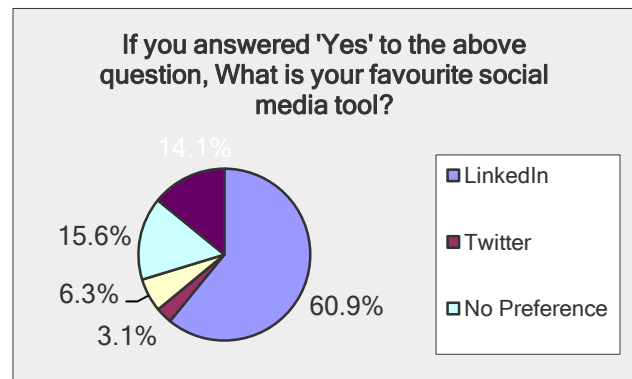
Social Media

Respondents in this survey were asked whether they use social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook to find candidates. Nearly sixty-six percent (65.6%) said they do and approximately twenty-two percent (21.9%) said they do not. Another eight percent (7.8%) said they do not use these tools but plan on using it. Three percent (3.1%) mentioned they use social media to maintain a connection with candidates.



named LinkedIn as their favourite while almost sixteen percent (15.6%) had no preference. Some specified that they use LinkedIn “because it is a business professional network”.

In terms of their favourite social media tool to find candidates, sixty-one percent (60.9%)



Additional Suggestions for Candidates

Dealing with gaps in employment history and over-qualification

When asked how candidates should address ‘gaps’ in their employment history, nearly thirty-six percent (35.9%) said they should include a statement in the ‘work experience’ section and twenty-three percent (23.4%) indicated that they should give an explanation in a cover letter. Sixteen percent (15.6%) said that, candidates should explain (in a chronological resume) where the gap occurred, or they should fill the gap with professional development.

With respect to over-qualification, fifty-nine percent of respondents (59.4%) felt all credentials and work experience should be included, while fourteen percent (14.1%) believe candidates should exclude credentials and experience that might create concern about being over qualified. Eight percent (7.8%) suggested that candidates focus on relevant experience and credentials, or they could use generic equivalents of credentials and titles.

What are the top five interview questions candidates should answer?

This question generated a number of examples for candidates to consider, and for the purposes of this report, we have shortlisted 30 of these questions and included them as Appendix IV. These are arbitrarily listed, and not in order of importance:

Another question that garnered several responses was “*What’s the one resume advice you would give to an internationally-educated professional / new immigrant?*” A summary of those responses are included as **Appendix II**.

CONCLUSION







From the data collected in this survey, there are some obvious commonalities in what recruiters, hiring managers, and HR professionals look for in resumes and cover letters, and in the questions they ask candidates. Correct spelling and grammar, the chronological resume format, professional layout, and a focus on value instead of fluff, clearly led the pack in their preferences. Differences were mostly around the use (or not) of video resumes and social media. The report also offers a number of interview questions that job seekers can review to help them prepare better for their next interview. Of particular importance to internationally educated individuals, is the individual resume advice offered, as well as the answers dealing with employment gaps and over-qualification. Although respondents contributed their ‘top 5’ interview questions, they were diverse enough to create a ‘top 30 list’. While the results are not scientific, they offer insights and suggestions for us to ponder, whether we are job seekers, recruiters, hiring managers, career coaches or professional resume writers.

2010 CANADIAN RESUME & INTERVIEW TRENDS
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

CANADIAN RESUME & INTERVIEW TRENDS - 2010






1. What's your preferred length for a resume?

 Create Chart

		Response Percent
One Page		6.3%
Two Pages		43.8%
Depends on the level of the position		26.6%
No Preference		1.6%
 Show replies	Other (Please Explain) 	21.9%

2. What's your preferred resume style / format?

 Create Chart

		Response Percent
Chronological - Jobs are listed in reverse chronological order		54.7%
Functional - Skills-based / Functional Headings that relate to the position		7.8%
Combination / Hybrid of both styles		32.8%
Portfolio - Examples of completed projects		0.0%
No Preference		0.0%
 Show replies	Other (please specify) 	4.7%

3. What are your thoughts on Objective Statements in resumes?

[Create Chart](#)

		Response Percent
Like them		15.6%
Dislike them		9.4%
Prefer a Summary Statement, Profile, or something similar		56.3%
No Preference		4.7%
Show replies Other (please specify)		14.1%

4. How do you prefer to receive resumes?

[Create Chart](#)

		Response Percent
Regular (snail) Mail		1.6%
Email		78.1%
Fax		1.6%
Show replies Other (please specify)		18.8%

5. What's your preference for receiving emailed resumes?

[Create Chart](#)

		Response Percent
Resume in body of email without attachment		0.0%
Resume in body of email with attachment		64.1%
No Preference		12.5%
Show replies Other (please specify)		23.4%

6. How should candidates address 'gaps' in their employment history?

[Create Chart](#)

	Response Percent
Include a statement in the 'Work Experience' section of the resume describing the reason(s)	35.9%
Explain in the cover letter	23.4%
Include a statement at the bottom of the resume describing the reason(s)	6.3%
Do not give any reason(s)	10.9%
No Preference	7.8%
Show replies Other (please specify)	15.6%




7. Does your company use a scanning or database system to manage resumes?

[Create Chart](#)

	Response Percent
Yes, for all positions	48.4%
Yes, but only for selected persons	4.7%
No, don't plan to	25.0%
No, but plan to in the future	15.6%
Show replies Other (please specify)	6.3%







8. Are you responsible for making hiring decisions at your company?

[Create Chart](#)

			Response Percent
	Yes		57.8%
	No		17.2%
Show replies	Other (please specify)		25.0%

9. On average, how many resumes do you receive for each open position?

[Create Chart](#)

			Response Percent
	0 - 10		17.2%
	11 - 20		9.4%
	21 - 30		14.1%
	31 - 40		12.5%
	41 and over		37.5%
Show replies	Other (please specify)		9.4%

10. What do you think of video resumes?

[Create Chart](#)

		Response Percent
We accept video resumes		3.1%
We plan to accept video resumes in the future		3.1%
We need to research the implications of video resumes before accepting them		28.1%
We do not accept video resumes and probably won't		39.1%
No Preference		14.1%
Show replies Other (please specify)		12.5%






11. How should a candidate handle 'over-qualification' in a resume?

[Create Chart](#)

		Response Percent
Include all credentials and work experience		14.1%
Include all credentials and work experience, but explain in the cover letter the reason for applying for a lower-level position		59.4%
Exclude credentials and experience that might indicate over-qualification.(Dumb down the resume)		14.1%
No Preference		4.7%
Show replies Other (please specify)		7.8%






12. Do you use social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook) to find candidates?

[Create Chart](#)

		Responses
		Percent
Yes		65.6%
No		21.9%
No, but plan on using them		7.8%
No, will not use them		1.6%
Show replies Other (please specify)		3.1%










13. If you answered 'Yes' to the above question, what is your favourite social media tool?

[Create Chart](#)

		Responses
		Percent
LinkedIn		60.9%
Twitter		3.1%
Facebook		6.3%
No Preference		15.6%
Show replies Other (please specify)		14.1%

14. What's the #1 mistake candidates make on a resume?

 Create Chart

		Response Percent
Spelling and grammar errors		28.1%
Resume not customized for the position		31.3%
Length / Work History issues		1.6%
Lack of accomplishments		10.9%
Unprofessional formatting		10.9%
Poor or fluffy objectives		3.1%
Lying		6.3%
Listing hobbies		0.0%
Listing hobbies that do not relate to the position		0.0%
 Show replies	Other (please specify) 	7.8%

15. If you had one resume advice for someone who is an Internationally-Educated Professional / new immigrant, what would it be?





Selected responses are included as **Appendix II**.

16. What's your #1 pet peeve about resumes?

Selected responses are included as **Appendix III**.








17. How important are cover letters?

[Create Chart](#)

		Response Percent
Candidates must submit a cover letter for each position		38.1%
Not important. I don't have time to read them.		15.9%
No Preference		30.2%
Show replies Other (please specify)		15.9%





18. How best to address the cover letter if a name is not provided?

[Create Chart](#)

		Response Percent
Dear Hiring Manager		21.9%
Dear Human Resources Manager		3.1%
Dear Sir/Madam		18.8%
Leave it blank if they don't have a name		3.1%
To Whom it May Concern		10.9%
No Preference		26.6%
Show replies Other (please specify)		15.6%

19. What's the ideal length of a cover letter?

 Create Chart

			Response Percent
	One Page		50.0%
	Half Page		37.5%
 Show replies	Other (please specify)		12.5%

20. What are the top 5 interview questions a candidate should answer?

Appendix IV contains a selection of 30 of the most frequently occurring answers.

2010 CANADIAN RESUME & INTERVIEW TRENDS SURVEY

If you had one Resume Advice for Internationally-Educated Professionals / New Immigrant, what would it be?

There were a lot of overlaps in the answers to this question, and in many cases, we have tried to eliminate the obvious repetitions. The answers have been copied directly from the survey and so have not been edited primarily to maintain the meaning that the respondents intended.

- Focus on your skills as it relates to the job you are applying for
- Proper spelling and grammar are imperative. Employers want to know that those representing them can maintain their professional image.
- Provide more detailed information on former employers and the positions held. Provide relevant website addresses for background information.
- Highlight Canadian equivalency in your education and use a functional resume format
- Be patient
- Highlight achievements
- Align work experience with the job requirements
- Be specific and detailed about job experience and capabilities
- Make sure spelling and grammar are correct. Have the resume professionally done if necessary
- Get your education accredited for equivalence at www.icas.com
- Ensure your education/qualifications have been accredited by Canadian institution - and not just for 'immigration' purposes
- Your resume is never "done". It is a work in progress for all jobs.
- Make sure your resume clearly addresses all the qualifications of the position. Adding a cover letter with a table (Column 1: You asked for; Column 2: I have) is very helpful to a recruiter who has hundreds of resumes to go through
- Don't put personal details, e.g. date of birth, place of birth, marital status, etc.
- Verify how your education credentials translate into Canadian accreditation
- Proofread
- Try to gain volunteer Canadian experience to boost your chances
- Find out the most current way to send resumes
- Familiarize yourself with best practices of North American resume writing, i.e. no personal information, picture, etc.
- Have the education assessed against Canadian standards, for example, a CA in India is equivalent to Canadian CGA Level 4
- Target contract roles to gain Canadian experience
- Summarize job related skills in the first paragraph of your resume
- Get professional assistance
- Make it simple and easy to read...not too wordy
- Do not make typos. Be realistic in your mission/career statement objective
- Be honest
- Ensure your English is good

- Spell check
- Link your experience to Canadian needs
- Show your draft documents to lots of your friends and acquaintances. Take the feedback seriously. Do it until you get a version that has no English or other mistakes
- Get your resume rewritten and reformatted by a Canadian resume company. These resumes stand out from a mile away!
- Have recommendation letters
- Match your past job responsibilities with the appropriate Canadian title. Give details of your work experience and of the education (possible equivalence). Provide a Profile or summary to enlist skills and accentuate transferable skills. If English/ French is not your mother tongue get a native, or go to a center and get proof reading assistance
- Clearly indicate the "Canadian equivalent" of the education achieved overseas
- Tailor resume to position, and research, research, research
- Detail as much Canadian experience as possible, even if it's part time, volunteer, or short term work. Also, point out Canadian similarities in any relevant prior experience
- Create and grow a network - and don't ever stop!
- Test your English skill level
- Volunteer to gain experience
- Know who you are applying to. Customize resume and research the employer
- List work authorization and the intent to meet new country's requirements
- Provide brief comparison of international standards vs Canadian: ISO, Lean, Manufacturing, etc.
- Use a functional resume
- Highlight how you were the top producer, how you solved problems, etc. This would show that you were above average employee and that's impressive no matter where you came from
- Seek professional assistance developing a resume suitable for North American roles
- List skills and ability and what you can bring to the table
- Enroll in courses at your local post-secondary educational institution to understand the Canadian HR methods so you may meet the standards for professional accreditation
- Use the combination resume style and obtain a Canadian certification in the field that you are seeking to pursue before seeking work in Canada
- Toss-up between checking for spelling and grammatical errors and indicating whether or not the applicant is eligible to work in Canada and if they are eligible for licensure with the appropriate licensing body
- The longer the resume the better for us. Include all relevant tasks and technologies used
- Mention eligibility to work in Canada
- Apply, but pursue a Visa on their own in the meantime... likely won't be considered unless they have a very specialized skill set

2010 CANADIAN RESUME & INTERVIEW TRENDS SURVEY

What's Your #1 Pet Peeve About Resumes?

- Get to the point. Too wordy; makes it hard to figure out what the person has done and how it applies to current application
- When they have a different position listed on their resume than their cover letter
- Redundancies
- When tasks/duties performed are listed in paragraph form
- Spelling errors
- Pictures on resumes
- Vague or general objectives, summaries
- Lack of professionalism in the layout and composition
- Not formatted to flow nicely, sometimes bullets are all over the place and it makes them hard to read. After going through 100s of resumes, these are the ones that test one's patience
- Massive email blasts where the resume does not target the position they are applying for
- Chronological history of events dating back to high school (especially when the applicant has been out of high school for 3 or more years)
- Content that is unrelated to the role!
- I do not like to see the standard "responsible for" beginning of each point regarding experience. I also do not care to see "references available upon request" - of course they would be!
- When resume is longer than 3 pages
- People don't write to the posting requirements
- Resume not specific to position applied for
- "Generic" Objectives
- Formatting and font issues
- Resume addressed to the wrong company or person in the letter, but has the correct email information. Also, sending out the same resume to everyone
- Not targeting the position - generic resumes
- When the resume very obviously does not match the job
- We are an industry specific recruiting firm. We are not interested in receiving resumes from candidates with no relevant experience in this industry. Do not waste people's time
- Ones that come across as 'help me, I need a job'. I am quite willing to hire them if their skills fit my needs; their job is to make that connection for me if they want the job
- Lack of detail on duties and accomplishments
- Resume or cover letter not addressing the requirements of the position
- Resume not tailored to the position

- Lack of thought and planning that goes into a presentation
- Very long resumes - 8 + pages. No matter how many years of experience a person has - this is too much and no one is really reading all that! Plus, do not confuse a resume with a portfolio! I like seeing portfolios, but at the interview, or if requested
- General statements
- Person does not succinctly explain what exactly they have done in each position and qualifying who these employers are
- Resumes created by professional resume writers - I am not hiring the writer but the actual person behind the writer
- Dull job descriptive statements – simply listing their normal daily routine! Need S.T.A.R Statements- Situation, Task, Action & Results
- Too generic. Lots of 'Responsible for's' with few real accomplishments
- Too long and not to the point
- Disorganization
- Terrible formatting
- Talking about "being responsible" for things without including related quantitative objectives and results
- Typos
- Resumes longer than 2 pages long, and messy-looking
- Using a font that is hard to read
- People who arbitrarily apply for a job, without indicating about why we should hire them and why they want the opportunity
- Too much information to sift through - start with summary statement
- People who cut and paste and have a number of different fonts, etc. on the same document
- Spelling errors
- When people include irrelevant information
- Resumes not tailored to the specific position
- When information is left out or information on the resume is inaccurate
- Applying for positions they are not even remotely qualified for. They are just applying for everything they see. This occurs more times than not
- Lack of customization, grammar and spelling/formatting errors
- Not sending the chronological resume
- I strongly dislike receiving unsolicited resumes
- Poor structure/layout
- Fluff
- Resumes that are too long with no specific focus

2010 CANADIAN RESUME & INTERVIEW TRENDS SURVEY

What are the top five interview questions candidates should answer?

- Why do you want to work for this company?
- How does your experience relate to the position?
- Walk me through the steps of a project you completed successfully.
- Give an example of how you handled a work conflict situation.
- What do you consider your strengths/weaknesses to be?
- What do you feel would be a weakness if we hired you?
- Why are you looking for a new opportunity at this time?
- What is important to you in a new position?
- What is your salary expectation?
- Why do you feel you are the appropriate candidate (why should we hire them?)
- What do you know about our company (as well as what differentiates us from the competition)?
- What have you done to contribute to a team environment?
- How do you adapt to a changing environment (how adaptable or flexible are they?)
- What 3 major attributes do you offer (non-tangible) and 3 tangible attributes you offer the position and company?
- Tell me about what you know about this position and the organization?
- What did you do prepare for this interview?
- If you could custom tailor a position to suit your skills & interests - what would it look like?
- What positive personal attributes do you bring to the job?
- Why are you interested in this job?
- What benefits would I have in hiring you into this position?
- Tell me about your experience and how it has prepared you for this position?
- Describe to me your ideal working environment?
- How would your peers/ subordinates/Manager describe you?
- What do you think your opportunities for development are? What skills do you possess that could use some fine tuning?
- Based on your experience and skills, how do you feel you can add value to this position/role?
- What are your career goals in next 2 to 5 years?

- If I was to call your supervisor, what do you think they would tell me would be your attributes and areas for improvement?
- Tell me about a time you worked with someone you did not like or vice versa. What was the situation and outcome?
- How will we know you are the right choice?
- Tell me about a time that you did or did not break a company rule and why you had to contemplate what your end decision was?

About The Wright Career Solution:

The Wright Career Solution is a full-service career management firm specializing in career transition and resume, interview and job search coaching for mid- to senior-level professionals as well as internationally educated professionals. Daisy Wright, its President, is a multi-credentialed and award-winning Canadian Career Leader, and author of **No Canadian Experience, eh? A Career Survival Guide for Immigrants**. We can be reached via: www.thewrightcareer.com, www.careertips2go.com, www.daisywright.com, www.canadianexperience-eh.com.