

AFTER 11,000 RESUMES, JAMES HAS ADVICE FOR ORTHO JOB SEEKERS

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Laurie J. James

What advice does a professional resume writer have for those who are looking for work? *OTW* spoke with expert Laurie J. James to find out.

Laurie J. James is a professional resume writer and a leader among career practitioners. In 34 years, James has written over 11,000 resumes.

OTW spoke with James about her professional experience. During her interview, James provided practical advice to assist *OTW* readers experiencing a career transition.

A graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, James is one of only 11 master career directors in the world. After earning a Bachelor of Business Administration, James returned home to Louisiana. Unsure of what she was going to do, she started a typing service. Laughing James commented, "That's how we used to communicate, through typewriters."

Initially her service was focused on oil and gas. However, it was 1986 and a difficult time to live in the South. James recalled it was, "Around the time that the oil bust happened in the South."

Less than three years out of college, James faced an uncertain world with only her typewriter and a newly formed company called Just Your Type, Inc. James said, "I moved back to my apartment with \$200 in my savings account and no idea what I was doing."

She found a place in the uncertain times as friends and colleagues began calling her to ask for resume help. Many of them were without work and relied on James for her marketing talents. James said, "I had no background training other than a quick course in college. But I'm organized. I'm good on the keyboard and I can market. The whole point of a resume is marketing."

Her success forced her to grow. After helping friends develop their resumes, many of them moved, and with them, her whole network. James recalled, "All my friends relocated to Atlanta, to Houston. I was like, what have I done? My whole network, they're gone."

James was quick to adapt and her initiative proved influential in the resume writing and research community. In the mid-1990s, resume writing credentialing was just taking off. James co-founded and presided over the Professional Resume Writing and Research Association (PRWRA). PRWRA was rebranded to Career Directors International in 2005.

LinkedIn

A LinkedIn certified career enlightenment writer, James understands LinkedIn's influence in the professional development world. When asked how the job search has changed over the past few years, James answered without hesitation, "The biggest game changer has been LinkedIn." Founded in a living room in 2002, LinkedIn was officially launched on May 5, 2003. More than just a job board, LinkedIn has developed into a professional tool linking together recruiters, marketers, employers, and employees. In 2016, Microsoft completed its acquisition of LinkedIn.

James said, "If you're looking for a job or career change, you have to be on LinkedIn because that's the superhighway where most people are going to find those particular jobs that are not advertised anywhere else. Plus, it's recruiter-based so recruiters are constantly looking through LinkedIn profiles to find that perfect candidate who may or may not be even looking."

James understands the utility of LinkedIn for anyone interested in a career transition. She engages in LinkedIn coaching and reviews profiles for clients. Creating an attractive profile is an ongoing process. James, "We need to get everything filled out. It's got to be the right tense. It's got to be touchy-feely. Be sure to update it."

James continued, "It's got to be current. The right message has to be sent. As far as job seekers, that's going to be really important. Not the only part, but that's going to be a real important part of the engine that moves them forward."

Crafting the Resume

The first step for many in their job search is developing a resume. Nearly every resume James comes across has the same issues. Her simple advice can change the outcome of a job search.

James' first piece of advice in resume crafting is to check that the information is accurate. In almost every resume she critiques there are typos. James said, "I'm not talking about commas and periods. I'm talking about typos in the phone number. Typos in the email address."

Cringing, James added, "Can you imagine sending out a resume to 250 people and the email and/or phone number are wrong?"

James' second piece of advice in resume crafting is do not use a Microsoft Word resume template. The templates can be a starting point but should be remade by the resume writer. James' reasoning is two-fold. She expounded, "Use the template, try to mirror that but don't use it because the algorithms that the search engines are using, they totally chew up the Microsoft Word."

In addition, she has found that using a template may send the wrong message to potential employers. James explained, "It looks like you don't care. It goes to work ethic."

Job seekers can utilize LinkedIn for their virtual resume. James detailed the process for reformatting a LinkedIn profile into a resume, "[I]f you go to your profile and you go to save to PDF, it's an option under 'more.' It reformats your LinkedIn profile into a black and white, save to PDF format. It looks like a resume."

A starting point for many job seekers, James encourages clients to use the information on their LinkedIn profile to craft their resume. As with the actual resume, it is important that the information is accurate. She encourages everyone to look at their LinkedIn profile. James said, "Make sure it is as good and it is as filled out as humanly possible so that even if somebody is just looking at it with the naked eye they can get a good glimpse of what you're about."

James' third piece of advice in resume crafting is to focus on quick information. Forget icons and fancy graphics. James explained, "A resume, just like any other social media branding, it's about that special brand and it's not about icons. It's about quick information."

A quick piece of information to include at the top of the document is credentials. Credentials include any type of degree. James emphasizes for clients with advanced degrees that they need to make sure it shows, typically after their name.

A quick and concise resume is important for the full recruitment cycle. The person initially vetting the resume may not be the person in charge of hiring. James encourages clients to make it simple for the first set of eyes to recognize their skill set. This ensures they move through the vetting process.

As a resume moves through the vetting process it must continue to appeal to the potential employer. Appeal includes visual appeal as well as content. Many resumes may only be viewed virtually and for a minimal amount of time. James reminds clients that potential employers may only see the resume during the interview. James said, "They may be literally looking at the resume online or in paper form as they're starting the interview because of timing and everything else."

The job search process is a challenge. As the job market becomes tighter, an effective resume is an essential resource for both employers and job seekers.

Indeed

Indeed is a top ranked job site that boasts over 250 million unique visitors every month. Indeed gives job seekers free access to "search for jobs, post resumes, and research companies." James recommends Indeed to job seekers because, "it's easy and people need easy right now because everything is overwhelming."

Her sole advice for job seekers utilizing Indeed is to build a resume. James said, "if you want to have an Indeed profile that makes the most impact and makes the most sense, build your resume."

James elaborated, “Do not upload your resume because Indeed has a particular funky algorithm that will put education in experience and will put your headline in education...no matter how you format it. It is not about the formatting, it’s about the Indeed algorithm.”

A little bit of work at the beginning can streamline the Indeed job seeking process. James said, “You have to do the early work so that the later work can be much easier and that’s what most people don’t even think about.”

Stay Positive

Even the most effective job search can be overwhelming. Crafting a resume and utilizing networks are the foundation of any job search. However, choosing how to respond to the challenges of the current economic environment may be the most important tool for anyone in a career transition. James maintains a positive attitude amid difficult times. She understands what it is like to experience career uncertainties. James said, “We do what we can. We utilize our talents to the best of our ability to look for opportunities.”

James found her opportunity, not because she is a technical person, but because she is a people person. James said, “I love people. Everybody’s got their own unique thumbprint. Their own unique story. My job, collaboratively, is to help them market that to the best of their ability.”

James continued, “Just getting somebody to get out of their own funk and seeing—I am worth something. I may have gotten fired. I may have gotten laid off but there is life at the end of the tunnel. There is light and life. That is what drives me to be able to do what I do. Is helping people to that level.”

A resource for clients during their most difficult times, James recognizes how hard life is for everyone right now. James said, “The biggest challenge that anybody has right now is falling down and getting back up. Most people are having a tough time getting back up.”

James emphasized that anyone creating brand awareness should keep it positive. “The biggest tip I can give is to keep it positive. Be considerate. Be mindful.”

James incorporates positivity into her daily routine. She encourages everyone to engage in activities that present a positive message. James also reminds clients, “Doesn’t matter who you are—doesn’t matter—we need positivity and you need to be aware that what you’re projecting is seen by other people. Whether they tell you or not, people see what you’re doing. People are always watching.” An optimist in these challenging times, James reminds everyone to, “Keep revitalizing and renewing yourself and keep plugging on and have faith.”

Getting Started

James, who may be reached at www.lauriejames.com, works closely with Robin Young Orthopedic Recruiters, Tim Schmidt (tim.schmidt@sanfordrose.com) and Neal Hightower (neal.hightower@sanfordrose.com).

James offers the full range of services for job seekers including resume writing, career coaching, outplacement, and motivational speaking. The heart of her services for the past 34 years has been free critiques. She offers free critiques of resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn profiles, or any other profile

a job seeker may need reviewed. James tells people what needs to be done and understands that most people do not have the skills to get it perfect their first time.

James has built her business around helping people. Her free services emulate her belief that helping others is important. James said, "It doesn't cost to give me a call or to reach out or email."

James recognizes the challenges being faced by orthopedists, "I know that the orthopedics industry, everybody is getting laid off right now and it's rough."

She acknowledged, "It's hard right now. I don't turn away from any challenge so anything anyone wants to ask I'm happy to help."