

How to Write a Powerful Physician Resume



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The Physician Executive Power Resume

No physician I know obtained their big break, their non-clinical job or their bust-open-opportunity by virtue of an impressive piece of paper. This is not to say the resume is not important; it is. But the resume is only a single element of successful transition---indeed for some of you, the resume will be *irrelevant*. Your own chutzpa, contacts, risk-taking, great invention, cleverness, or entrepreneurship, will dictate your success.

There are countless books on the subject of resumes, and I will start off by recommending you read these three:

- The Resume Handbook by Arthur Rosenberg and David Hizer
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- Rites of Passage at \$100,000 + by John Lucht (read only his section on “long copy sells” format)
- Headhunters Confidential by Alan Schonberg

We will not attempt to cover every nuance of resumes and cover letters, as the subject is covered expertly in the recommended books. Rather, I will share some essential insights and tips for crafting an effective *physician executive* resume.

As we review resume essentials and as you draft your own, keep in mind these three qualities of a *good* physician executive resume:

1. Shows professionalism through formatting, inclusion of appropriate details and OMISSION of inappropriate details
2. Lists accomplishments using appropriate ACTION verbs
3. Demonstrates ability to SOLVE PROBLEMS FOR THE DECISION MAKER who is reading the resume

Why a Resume Versus a CV?

What is the difference between a resume and curriculum vitae (CV)? A CV is a list of vital statistics, including employment, research, education, awards, publications, patents etc. A resume is a *creative* document whose objective is to *persuade* the reader that you have the ability to solve specific business problems. You may get advice contrary to what you'll receive in this Course, but here's the skinny: Put all of your effort into crafting an effective *resume*. Your resume is the document that most employers will prefer in order to discern what you can do *for them*. Even for employers in clinical trials work or government research that request a CV, always have your strong executive resume ready. If you are contemplating fields outside of these two, focus only on the resume.

Sell Your Accomplishments Using This Mental Checklist

Coming up with compelling and persuasive language that describes accomplishments is one of the biggest challenges of ANY career adventurer. Physicians are at an even great disadvantage since they lack the experience of "traditional" job hunting. First, it is important to think of your work as a series of *accomplishments*, rather than "job responsibilities" or "skills." Use this Accomplishment Checklist to help you think about your worthy experiences in terms of RESULTS ACHIEVED.

In your professional experiences, **have you:**

- Saved your organization money?
- Reduced unnecessary admissions?
- Invented or developed a new product, procedure or process?
- Discovered something new?
- Improved operational efficiency?
- Reduced wait times?
- Improved patient satisfaction (measurably)?
- Improved provider or team morale (measurably)?

- Drove a merger or acquisition?
- Improved NCQA rating?
- Achieved increased productivity despite resource cutbacks?
- Started the *first ever* of something?
- Uncovered a quality catastrophe?
- Averted a safety nightmare?
- Improved patient safety (measurably)?
- Improved market share?
- Surpassed a competitor?
- Launched a new product?
- Identified a new market?
- Improved sales revenue?
- Improved sales win/loss ratio?
- Improved medical loss ratio?
- Decreased consumer complaints?
- Improved provider compliance?
- Improved quality indicators?
- Delivered the keynote speech?
- Made the Good Morning America or Oprah show?

Frame Your Accomplishments With Powerful Words

Now that you have a sense for results-oriented achievements, use *action* verbs and phrases to powerfully frame them. All of the resume books have extensive lists of “action oriented verbs”. In addition you can hang out at the bookstore and library and skim through the many books devoted EXCLUSIVELY to action words. Try to use this “Challenge-Accomplishment-Result” template in crafting your phrases:

- Faced with (Challenge),
- [I] (Powerful past tense verb),
- Resulting in (Measurable result).

Here are three examples from Dr. RI, Dr. NN and Dr. LT that demonstrate the “Challenge-Accomplishment-Result” approach:

- **Dr. RI:** “Challenged with a 50% rejection rate of clinical trial results due to data entry error, spearheaded the company’s Data Process Improvement initiative, resulting in 70% improvement in data quality in the first 6 months.
- **Dr. NN:** “Faced with a 3-week-long nursing strike and strained nursing-hospital relations, drove the accreditation process through on-time completion and 3-year certification.”
- **Dr. LT:** “In the face of critical media coverage of patient safety, defused the hospital board’s anxiety with a series of community workshops and speeches, earning the Mayor’s Community Service Award.”

Another way of think of framing your accomplishment is the SMART way:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievement
- **R**esults-oriented
- **T**ime-oriented

For more advice on how to better communicate your accomplishments, two excellent articles are available free on the Internet from Career Lab:

- *Showcase Your Homerun Accomplishments* by William S. Frank
http://www.careerlab.com/art_homeruns.htm
- *Pack Every Word With Power* by Gary Provost
http://www.careerlab.com/art_powr.htm

Accomplishments That Reveal Your Unique Talents

Accomplishments should also give some hints about your personality and passions. Here are two examples of accomplishment statements that reflect the respective physician's personality.

This physician will include “entrepreneurial” in the “Summary of Qualifications” section of her resume. One of her accomplishment statements reads as follows:

- “Designed and developed a surgical ablation tool, successfully managing efforts from patent to product launch; device acquired by American Home Products 8 months after release, resulting in \$1.2 million net profit”

Another physician emphasizes his qualification of “innovative leader” in his Summary, and lists this accomplishment to back that up:

- “Established the first ever collaborative community asthma outreach program, increasing Primary Care physician participation by 30% each of the past 3 years; program resulted in decrease in patient ER visits for severe asthma by 50% in the first 18 months of operation”

Action Plan: *Powerful Framing of Your Accomplishments*

In your next action plan, use the template above and powerful action-oriented words to craft succinct phrases that accurately reflect your accomplishments. Spend a lot of time in this action plan! Write and rewrite your accomplishment statements until you are satisfied you have used powerful, persuasive language. The fruit of your labor in this action plan will become the “guts” of your resume in the next section.

Top 15 Guidelines for Formatting Your Resume

You will find different opinions on how to best format your resume, the maximum number of pages for your resume, whether to list your experience in a chronological (going back in time) versus a functional (types of experience) order. There are many “rules” and many times to break the rules. What follows are my top 15 guidelines for resume formatting, based on both and good and bad resumes I’ve seen:

1. Common knowledge is that a resume should be no more than 2 pages. However, feel free to extend it up to 5 pages. These pages however, must be formatted in a way that allows *easy skimming* of your topics. This is what John Lucht calls “long copy” format in his book, **Rites of Passage** (recommended earlier). You will see one physician’s example shortly.
2. List your experience in chronological order with most recent first.
3. Omit an “objectives” section: your objective will be communicated through either an Introduction phone call or letter and will be slightly different for each company you talk with.
4. Include a “Summary of Qualifications” at the top, in bulleted format (no more than 5 bullets).
5. Always use action verbs in describing your *experience* (covered in the previous section)
6. Limit your education description to no more than 2 lines per institution
7. Limit your practice experience to no more than 2-3 lines per practice; include committee membership in the three lines unless you had *significant* accomplishments while *leading* the committee
8. Include only your RELEVANT speaking engagements and publications; list these at the end. Relevant means: would be applicable and germane to the work you want to do for the company.
9. Do not include personal information such as marital status, hobbies, age
10. Do not include “references on request”

11. Do not include anything earlier than college, unless you are a medical student or resident; even then only include significant *professional* work experience or research (No pizza delivery work.)
12. Use a Times Roman or Garamond font, black 12-point; bold only the headings
13. Print on ivory or white high quality 100% cotton paper
14. Include your address and phone number at the top of your resume
15. Proofread it ten times to ensure it has NO typographical errors. Have someone else proofread it 5 times.

Recommended Resume Format

Here is the specific format I recommend you use. This is simply laid out, easy to skim and will allow plenty of “room” for accomplishments. Keep in mind that the average reader will spend less than one minute on your resume before formulating a first impression!

- Name, address, phone and email at the top of the page
- Summary of Qualifications; 4-5 bullet points
- Experience section: List in reverse chronological order employment, including part-time directorships, part time consulting or speaking, speaking or product development. (**Be sure to have a name for your consulting, speaking or product development “firm”!**). Significant research experience will appear here as part of employment.
- Clinical Practice Experience: Include volunteer committee work here that is not substantive enough to include in the section above
- Education: College, Medical School, College Certificate Work, Other significant training that resulted in Certification by an accredited body.
- Residency and Fellowship Training: Do not include minor research experience during Fellowship. Mention Board Certification here.
- Honors: (optional, and from *college forward only*)
- Patents: (If applicable to the position)

- Select Speaking Engagements: Only national, regional speaking relevant to target reader
- Select Publications: Only those relevant to the target reader

Example Resume: Dr. MC

In the next few pages you will see an example of an effective resume written by Dr. MC, an Internist who has been working on his transition over 12 months. His Intention Statement is: *“I want improve the effectiveness of continuing medical education on physician decision-making.”* This physician has been making contacts within healthcare delivery systems, insurance companies and pharmaceutical firms over the past 3 months, seeking the “decision makers.” His leverage portfolio consists primarily of his part time position as associate Director of Physician Education and part time consulting and speaking through his own firm. His resume is cleanly laid out following the guidelines discussed and includes results-oriented accomplishments.

After you read Dr. MC’s resume, be sure to review the many examples of effective resumes in the books mentioned earlier.

Mark P. Chavez, MD, MPH

2305 Ocean Drive NE San Diego, California 98005

Office: (425) 895-1307 Home: (425) 885-5753

Email: mchavez@chavezgroup.com

Summary of Qualifications:

- Physician executive versed in medical management, evidence-based practice and hospital-physician collaboration
- Nationally known expert in physician education method and effectiveness
- Accomplished educator adept at training both clinical and non-clinical audiences
- An initiator and implementer who consistently exceeds target goals
- Focused team leader who encourages creative problem-solving

Experience:

2000 to Present

Advantage Health System
San Diego, CA

Associate Medical Director, Physician Education

Advantage Health System is a 6-hospital not-for-profit health system in south San Diego County. In this newly created role, I report to the Chief Medical Officer and oversee physician education and leadership development programs

- Developed and led first ever year-long Physician Leadership Series for Advantage regional physicians, enrolled to capacity in the first month; Leadership Series rated by attendees as top 5% for relevance and value; Exceeded CEO's target for physician participation by 30%, qualifying for bonus funding increase of 50% for the next fiscal year
- Faced with insufficient information system support to disseminate medical education announcements and news electronically to the Health System's 2500 physicians, secured outside sponsorship from Squibb Pharmaceutical for a dedicated 0.5 FTE medical education "webmaster" for 2 years; new physician education website visited by over 80% of physician staff each week

1999 to Present

Chavez Healthcare Leadership Group, LLC
San Diego, CA

Principal

CHLG advises insurance and pharmaceutical companies on medical education content and methodology, and also provides education to physicians at sponsored forums

- Created and delivered a 14-state hypertension education series for Pfizer pharmaceuticals, enabling the R&D team to recruit over 200 physicians for clinical trials participation
- Developed certification curriculum on Evidence-Based Medicine for pharmaceutical sales representatives; training purchased by six companies, with over 100 representatives now certified by CHLG

1998-2000

Oceanside Regional Hospital
San Diego, CA

Director of Physician Education

Oceanside Regional Hospital is a 350-bed community health system. Reporting to the CEO, I served as physician liaison for hospital-sponsored physician education events

- In response to dwindling attendance at hospital Grand Rounds, spearheaded a Physician Education Task Force which conducted formal survey of staff preferences for content and learning approach; team launched a redesigned Grand Rounds format, resulting in 200% increase in physician participation within 3 months, and exceeded target participation goal by 50% at 12 months

1994-Present

Oceanside Medical Associates
San Diego, CA

Internal Medicine Specialist, Partner

Oceanside is a 45-physician multi-specialty private group practice; with health Oceanside Regional Hospital serves a migrant and multi-ethnic patient population of over 200,000

Group Practice Leadership: Physician Education; Executive Council; Board Member

Oceanside Regional Hospital Committees: Quality Assurance, Medical Education

Education: BS, Psychology, University of California, Berkley, 1986, *Phi Beta Kappa*
MD, Stanford University, 1990, *Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society*
MPH, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, 1994
Certificate, Executive Management, UC San Diego Business School, 1998

Residency: Internal Medicine, Duke University Medical Center, 1990-93
Board Certified, Internal Medicine 1994

Associations: Association for Continuing Medical Education 1999
American College of Physicians, *Fellow*
American College of Physician Executives
California State Medical Society, *Past President*
American Medical Group Association

Select Publications:

American Medical Practice: Future Scenarios for a Learning Organization
Stanford Business Review, November 2001

Physician Learning Models in the Information Age, Physician Executive
Journal, October 2001

Turning Public Health Policy into Compelling Medical Education, Journal for
Continuing Medical Education, May 2001

*Why Johnny Physician Can't Read Another Journal: The Effects of
Information Overload on Physician Decision Making*, Letter to the
Editor, New England Journal of Medicine, February 2001

Innovations in Physician Continuing Education, Group Practice
Journal, October 2000

*Academic Detailing and Evidence-Based Practice: Borrowing From the
Pharmaceutical Industry*, MGMA Journal, August 2000

Speaking Engagements:

MGMA Annual Conference, “Innovations in Physician Continuing Medical Education,” August 2001

Alliance for Continuing Medical Education Annual Conference “View From the Frontlines: What’s Working in CME,” May 2001

Merck-Medco Healthcare Leadership Conference “Integrating an Evidence-Based Approach with Pharmaceutical Detailing,” July 2001

American College of Physicians Annual Conference, “The Impact of Distance Learning On Physician Continuing Education,” April 2001

California State Medical Society Annual Meeting, “Disseminating Critical Education to Physicians During a Community Health Crisis: Case Study From Oceanside,” July 2000

Alliance for Continuing Medical Education, “New Methods for Assessing Educational Needs of Physicians in Group Practice,” May 2000

Action Plan: *The Essentials of Your Resume*

Your action plan now is to create *your* resume! Begin first by penciling in each section of the resume outlined in your Workbook in the format recommended. After you prepare your draft, type up your first clean copy for editing. Include the “framed” accomplishments you completed in the previous action plan. Review the resume guidelines to see if you have covered the bases. Proofread and proofread again!