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**"If You Have An Apple And I Have An Apple And We Exchange Apples Then You And I Will Still Each Have One Apple. But If You Have An Idea And I Have An Idea And We Exchange These Ideas, Then Each Of Us Will Have Two Ideas."**  
--- **George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)**

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## How to Write a Career Objective

If you must include an objective in your resume, make sure it's not an afterthought-or a mere garnishing that does nothing to increase your chances of landing that job.

"Shoot for the moon, and maybe land among the stars." This is the way most career objectives sound in the resume of inexperienced job seekers. Vague. Uncertain. Aiming for everything and nothing. That is why, some experts warn, "If you cannot say it clearly, don't say anything at all." Why is this problem so common?

For most of us, a career objective is something thrown in-almost as an afterthought-when cooking up a resume. Something like a garnishing. An extra ingredient to spice things up. We think of it simply as an optional blank field we may choose to fill up with standard words in a standard format. Or, worse, with copied words from someone else's resume.

But if a career objective is just garnishing, as some people think it is, then why is it always placed on the crucial first line of the resume? This is the first statement the recruiter reads, after your name and contact numbers. Is that strategic placement just an accident? On the other hand, if this line is so important, then why the cavalier treatment?

### The One True Objective

This attitude-and the resulting vagueness-seems to come from the fact that most of us don't really know what we mean by career objective. Reading between the lines of expert opinions, we begin to see that they may really be talking about two different kinds of objectives:

1. A career objective for your life and
2. A career objective for your resume

Come again? Focus those glazing eyes, and let's take a closer look.

The dictionary defines "career" as "a person's advancement through life, especially in a profession." Job-hunting guru Richard Nelson Bolles is probably one of the staunchest proponents of the idea that we should aim for our one, true desire in life-and state that as our career objective. No two minds about it. For him, that objective is the whole point of the job hunt.

"Forget what is available out there. Go after what you really want," he advises boldly in the best-selling, annually updated book, *What Color is your Parachute?*

Does he differentiate between one's objective in life and the objective stated in the resume? Since Bolles is one career expert who does not think that a resume is a necessity, a statement of career objective specifically for a resume is not even a relevant issue to him.

In effect, he is saying that a resume is just an optional tool that a job seeker may choose not to use in the hunting process. It seems that if he has his way, he will do away with it completely. Go, figure. Still, he maintains that should a

job hunter use one, he must make sure that he, the job seeker, "shines through" all the words he puts in his resume.

In short, the resume should be tailored around the job hunter's career objective-his life objective-not the other way around. "Don't be a job-beggar," he says. "Be a resource person." Developing one's career objective in this vein is a hunter-driven process, which begins and ends with what the hunter is truly seeking.

### Tailor-Fit Your Objective to Your Resume

On the other hand, other experts take off on the common and very practical perception that we have to work with "what is available out there." What are the jobs on the market that a job hunter can apply for? Which jobs can fit, more or less, with his general direction in life? Which jobs can help him, in a step-by-step way, move toward his life objective.

For these experts, having several versions of a resume with several versions of a career objective is a real job-hunting necessity. Make sure that your career objectives will match the particular needs of the target employer, they advise. Makes a lot of sense, right? You do want a job, pay those bills.

Hence, it is important to clearly identify the parameters that the job seeker can work around-certain combinations of the following key elements, depending on what he wants to stress:

- \* The position (accounting, nursing)
- \* The field (publishing, computer technology)
- \* The hunter's marketable skills (human relations, mathematical abilities)

So as not to turn off those recruiters, heed these general guidelines for writing career objectives:

- \* Be concise (but not so specific that you limit yourself too much).
- \* Use verb phrases rather than sentences (Example: Seeking rather than I seek).

\*Be sure the objective is compatible with the resume.

\*Demonstrate your value as a candidate and as an asset, not what you will get.

In short, it is a market-driven process of developing objectives. The main aim is to make a hit with at least one of the available positions, in one of the open fields, with some of the hunters' marketable sets of skills. The lay of the land is defined by what the employers offer and the hunter must fit his objective(s) within this topography.

### Assess Yourself

The trouble with most career objectives we read is that they wobble between these two kinds of objectives, undecided. It is probably better for a job seeker to approach the job hunt one way or the other, but not somewhere in between. That is the surest path to vagueness and awkwardness.

In any case, though the experts differ on many things, they seem to agree on one thing. Always start with a comprehensive self-assessment. They are one in

saying: Clarify your career objectives (whichever kind they mean) by clarifying who you are.

So, let's get to the crux of the matter. After you've carefully assessed yourself, specifically your strengths and abilities, along with the tasks you have performed in previous jobs and how you intend to use them in the next one, what do you do next?

The next logical step, of course, is to labor at phrasing your objective well, making sure it does not sound "I-centered." Consider this example: "A position as a sales engineer requiring superior skills in managing and monitoring sales and promotions of equipment to clients." Now, contrast this with: "A position as a sales engineer, where I can enhance my skills in managing and monitoring sales and promotions of equipment to clients and eventually advance to higher positions." The difference between the two is obvious: the first is targeted at meeting the prospective employer's needs; the second emphasizes what the job seeker hopes to gain from, not contribute to, the prospective employer.

Keep in mind that similar positions could vary from one company to another. Therefore, you would do well to refrain from using job titles in career objectives. That way you don't limit your chances of being considered for the job that you want. This is not to say that very specific objectives have no use. If you really want a job that requires very specific skills, then, by all means, make your objective specific-but not limiting. This means your objective can apply to other jobs even if you must specify the skills that you think make you the perfect fit for the job you're applying for.

In the end, it is the job hunter's call what to aim for and how to state his or her career objective. Helpful resources are everywhere, specifically on the Internet. And the market is out there for the hunting.