The Key Elements of a Resume That Make it Visually Appealing

Content is critical – but like it or not, in a sea of resumes, the ones that are easy on the eyes are going to be the ones that get read. Step back and LOOK at your resume – how does it look? Professional? Cluttered? Empty? Lopsided? Is it easy to look at? Do the most important pieces of information stand out? Can you easily scan for specific information? Is it visually appealing to look at?

Creating visual appeal

First impressions count and your resume is the first impression a recruiter will have with you – what do you want that first impression to say? A visual appealing resume can show that you have the ability to present yourself with professionalism and style – and that you are an organized and well put together person. Remember, content comes first, but then take the time to address the areas below so you have a well put together visually appealing document.

Consistency

From a visual perspective, one of the most important things to pay attention to is consistency throughout the entire document. Whether its spacing, font size, font type, or any other element, it should follow a consistent and logical pattern or hierarchy. Consistency brings order and focus to the resume and removes feelings of chaos and lack of organization.

White space

Don't be afraid to have plenty of white space throughout the document. Having well positioned white space will make reading the document easier and will be quicker for the reader to find what they are looking for. Too much text is overwhelming for the reader and increases the chances that they will simply stop reading. Having white space is more inviting to the reader to actually read your resume.

Balance

Spacing and positioning of paragraphs, bullets, margins – all need to balance – top should match the bottom, left matches the right. Spacing between sections should all match. Worry less about whether you should have 1 inch or ½ margins, and instead just make sure they are balanced around the document.

Bullets

Bullets signal to the reader that something significant and impressive is being listed. A reader's eye will naturally be drawn to a bullet, so use them sparingly and only to communicate your most impressive accomplishments. Consider that it is possible the reader will *only* read the bulleted sections – what are the most critical things you want them to know? Also consider that if you have too many, they won't read them at all because it takes on the feeling of a list.

Fonts

Pick one font style and use it throughout the entire resume and cover letter. Your font style should match you and your resume – formal and professional? Chose a traditional font. Artsy? Chose a more decorative font. Some fonts also take up more space than others, so you can pick a font depending on the balance and amount of content on your document. But whatever you chose, be consistent.

For font size, between 9 and 12 is fine depending on how much content you have and how the size may hurt or enhance your balance and white space – but pick one size and stick with it. (Exception is your name which can be 3-4 sizes larger.)

Headings/Sections

Headings and sections make scanning your resume for information much easier. Limit your headings and sections to 3 – 5 total or you risk having a cluttered resume. If the reader is looking for a particular degree, they will want to find your education quickly. If they can't find it quickly, they may completely disregard. In a world where the average recruiter looks at a resume for less than 30 seconds, you want to make sure they can quickly and easily find whatever pertinent information they are looking for.

Bold, <u>underline</u> and *italics*

In general, you should limit your use of all 3 of these. Bolding your name, heading/sections, employers and schools is appropriate, but anything beyond that is distracting. Using italics in one section, perhaps the section headings, can be ok, but limit usage to only one section if any. There is really no reason to underline anything in a resume and it can make it difficult to read, so try to avoid underlining all together.