

Building a Resume and Preparing for the Interview Process

By John Ehrhardt
PwC Consulting
University of Virginia
Washington and Lee University
Son of Dave Erhardt (Gamma Zeta '81)
Written to help his younger brother Paul learn from his experience

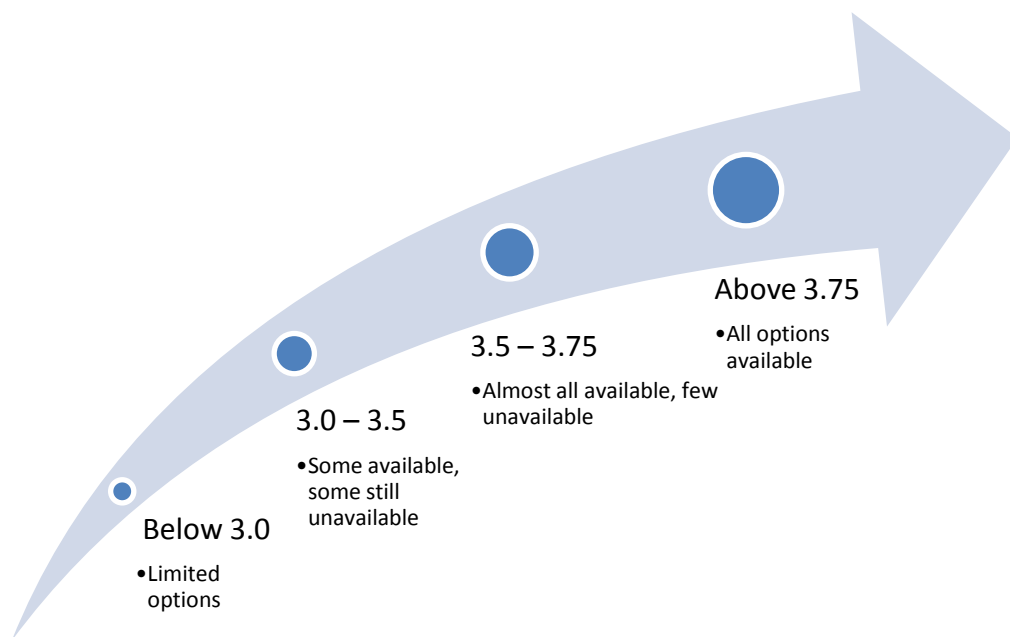
There is not just one way to create a resume. Over the course of the next four years, people will have different views on what you should do, how it should look, and what companies want to see. I have summarized the 5 most important things I believe you need to incorporate into your resume:

1. Excellent grades
2. Multiple majors
3. Business internship
4. Involvement/activity outside the classroom
5. Summer experiences

If you have these 5 things, I believe you will get the most interviews and have the most opportunities available to you. While having a resume will not solely result in a job, it will get you in the room and give you the chance to excel in the interview process which I know you have the capability to do. Because it is unlikely that you will know exactly what type of work you want to do when you finish college, giving yourself the most options possible is the best possible goal. I think if you focus on these things, you will save yourself time and energy by not getting consumed with the things that are inconsequential.

1. Grades

First and foremost, your GPA is the most important criteria that companies use to evaluate candidates. Be it for internships or full time jobs, the next four items listed below can help compensate if your grades are not excellent. However, having excellent grades is the easiest way to guarantee you will receive interviews. I believe to have unlimited options, a GPA of 3.75 or above will indicate strong academic performance as some companies will have a mandatory minimum requirement of 3.5. I graduated with a 3.4 and while this was adequate, having at least a 3.5 would have opened up more exclusive opportunities. Companies begin hiring for internships in the fall and winter of your junior year and for fulltime positions in the fall of your senior year, so your first two and a half to three years of grades are by far the most important. It is much easier to maintain an average than it is to make a significant move up the ladder, as I had to do.



Key Takeaways

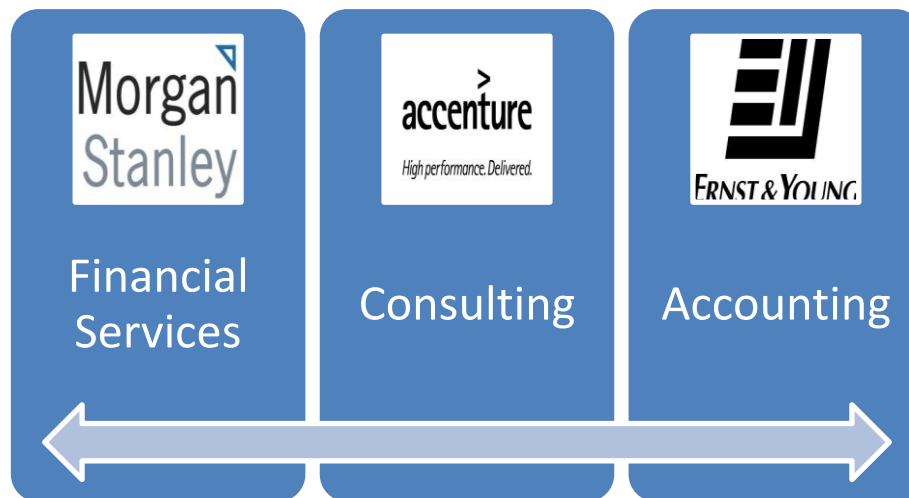
- i. Grades are the most important aspect of your resume
- ii. Your first 3 years in school are the ones that will count
- iii. 3.75 or higher

2. Major

Besides grades, the most limiting factor for most candidates is your course of study. If you are a Spanish major but your senior year decide you want to do Chemical Engineering, even with excellent grades you are will likely be unable to get interviews. That being said, assuming you enter into the Business School, you will have options like Management, Accounting, Finance, and Advertising. For a college graduate entering into business, there are roughly three areas with which you can start as an associate/entry level person:

- Financial Services – commercial and investment banks, asset management, insurance firms
- Consulting – strategy, management, transactions
- Accounting – corporate accounting, public accounting

This being said, again you want to major in something that gives you the most opportunities following graduation. In my experience, I was an Accounting and Business Administration Major. While this offered me the chance to do all the Accounting and some Consulting, certain types of financial Consulting and the majority of the Financial Services positions I did not qualify for based on my major. My recommendation for you is to study more than one area. If you major in Finance and minor in Accounting or major in both, you not only will be eligible for all types of business jobs, I think you will be better prepared when entering into the job market.



Key Takeaways

- i. Study more than one area
- ii. Finance & Accounting
- iii. Having high grades in your major classes is crucial

3. Business Internship

Companies are interested in candidates having a business-type internship, preferably in the field you are interested (i.e. accounting firms would like to see an internship at an accounting firm, a bank would like to see a finance-related internship). An internship makes it easy for companies to evaluate your credibility because some other reputable company has already found you acceptable for a position. It decreases the perceived risk that you as a candidate won't be prepared if you have already experienced what it is like to work in a business environment.

Additionally, during interviews and on your resume, having an internship will allow you to discuss experiences you've had working in an office and performing actual business tasks. It is a lot easier to discuss what you've done than try to explain how something you've done in class was similar to a real business scenario.

Another important reason to look for an internship is more and more companies are hiring primarily from their intern groups. Therefore, not as many full-time openings exist because companies hire anywhere from 30-70% of their new hires from their summer interns.

Finally, interviewing for an internship is easier than for a full-time job. Companies are less stringent in this process because they know they will be able to evaluate you first-hand over a summer and can then choose whether to offer you a full-time job or not. They will not expect you to know as much or have as many things on your resume. Below is a timeline of the interview process your junior year. Some finance jobs interview even earlier than January so the fall of your junior year is an important time.



Key Takeaways

- i. Interview questions are much easier when you can discuss actual business experiences
- ii. Companies are hiring increasing numbers of interns for full time jobs
- iii. Internships are a way to show you have business experience
- iv. Finding an internship in the field you are interested in is the optimal scenario
- v. Internship gives you the opportunity to see if you enjoy that type of work

4. Activities/Involvement

Companies are interested in candidates that are well-rounded. They want individuals who are involved, who have leadership experience, and who are doing other productive things in college besides studying or partying. I (and I'm sure many other people) wasted some time doing the wrong things. It is much more important to be involved and to actively participate in a few things, than to be a member of numerous things. The best litmus test to gauge if something you are doing could go on your resume, is ask the following question: "If I was asked in an interview what I did in this organization and what I learned, would I be able to answer that question"

I believe there is actual space for about 4 things on your resume in the extracurricular section. When I was a senior in college before I had a business internship, I included more than 4 things. Over the course of the next few years, if you find one thing a year you will be in great shape. Building over the course of 4 years is the easiest way to find activities that you actually enjoy and will allow you to have activities besides being in a fraternity on your resume.

- Leadership position – being the chair, vice president, or treasurer of any reputable organization
- Academic/school related – involvement in a school organization, student government, something is the business school, etc.
- Service – coaching a rec-league basketball team
- Filler – something to round out your resume to fill space, which could include being an alumni representative, tutoring, working in the athletic department office, etc.

When you list these on your resume, the important thing is to describe what you accomplished and not just the position you held or what you did. For example, demonstrating organization, time management, meeting deadlines, communicating with interested parties, working with different groups of people, and handling difficult situations are all skills that you want to exemplify in your description.

I have attached my resume from my sophomore, junior, senior year, and finally my current resume. As you can see on my resumes, I frequently updated and reworked my resume over the course of the last 4 years. My current resume uses action verbs to illustrate the skills I described above and I was able to eliminate the filler information that had existed in my resume in previous years before I had work experience, additional schooling, and limited descriptions.

Finally, use Career Services to get help with word choice, formatting, and content. These people look at resumes all the time and are employed to help you. Not going to them is an opportunity missed.

Key Takeaways

- i. Find things where you have an interest
- ii. Building over a period of time is easiest
- iii. Look for leadership in one or more areas
- iv. Constantly update
- v. Get feedback from several different people

5. Summer Experiences

While it is not as important as your grades, major, internship, or activities, what you do during the summer is a way to differentiate yourself. Because of the opportunities you have, you can really do anything over the summer. Companies just want to see you pursue something, so take this opportunity to go somewhere you're interested.

It's going to be difficult to force yourself to do something other than summer school because it's convenient, that's where your friends are, and it's close to the home and the golf course. That being said, I think freshman year is the perfect time to go to summer school. No one expects you to do anything ground-breaking the summer after your freshman year so take that opportunity to get ahead on your school work.

Your sophomore year is your chance to have a summer experience like going to DC and working in the Senate or studying abroad. There are limited opportunities for a business internship when you're a sophomore so it does not have to be working. Any activity that you want can be turned into an experience for your resume. You could go study abroad at St. Andrews over the summer, or study at the London School of Economics, or you could go live in Washington and have a great time. Any of these are suitable alternatives, and I promise will have just as good of a time as The Booth in Tuscaloosa.



Key Takeaways

- i. Find something of interest
- ii. Start looking early so you can recruit some friends to go too
- iii. Talk to people at the University to see coordinate course credits
- iv. If Washington, DC is the destination, decide on that early as the deadline is in the Fall