

Resumes and Demo Reels-- If Yours Aren't Working, Neither are You!

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1 Introduction

What does it take to get a job at a visual effects, computer animation or interactive company? This course shows how to open the door to interviews, put your life on a one-page resume, and showcase your talent in a three-minute-or-less demo reel.

Getting you an interview with someone who can hire you is the purpose of the resume, portfolio and demo reel. Prepare them with care. Have others give you feedback before you send them out.

There are many different jobs for artists. Determine what your strengths and interests are. Assess your skills. Design your marketing materials (the resume and demo reel) to reflect your strengths.

Make it easy for the employer or recruiter to see your work and make it easy to contact you.

2 Resumes

If your resume doesn't work, neither will you.

As a recruiter and career coach I have seen thousands of resumes. Here is how to make yours effective:

Make sure your contact information is on your resume and it is current. This includes your name, phone number (with current area code) and email address--if you have one. Make sure the contact information is easy to read and easy to find.

Don't send a web site url and expect the employer or recruiter to visit that web site to find your resume. If you want someone to get your resume, email it to them as a message not an attachment (Sometimes downloads don't work and many companies no longer accept attachments due to viruses). If you email a resume, make sure your name, phone number and email address are on it. Don't email your resume as a jpeg attachment. They don't print well.

Choose a type face that is easy to read.

List your skills. Be specific--don't say "a variety of software packages." Avoid huge blocks of type.

If your resume is more than one page, put your name, phone number, and email address on each page.

Your resume should tell who you are--what you know (skills), what you've done (accomplishments), and what you want to do. Remember your audience sees lots of demo reels and portfolios.

(objective or goal). If you are changing careers, focus your resume on the job you want rather than the job you have. If your resume shows a variety of jobs, make sure you have an objective at the top that indicates what job you're seeking.

Use paper that copies well--white or off-white. Don't include graphics or artwork on a gray scale behind the type. It doesn't copy or scan well. You can attach sample art work to a resume. Always include your contact info on attachments.

Proofread to get rid of typos and spelling mistakes.

Many companies scan resumes into computer databases. Select a font where the lower case l and number 1 are different enough that the computer won't confuse the characters.

Review your resume every 6 months to update your skills and accomplishments.

Your resume is a marketing tool. It is a chance to brag. Highlight any awards or special accomplishments.

3 Portfolios and Demo Reels

If you are an artist, an outstanding portfolio and demo reel is essential. Show your best work and keep it short. The demo reel and portfolio should be relevant to the job you want. If you want a job as a character animator, show mostly character animation work on your reel.

Your demo reel should contain only your best work and should be:

- *representative of your recent work and a showcase for your skills and talent

- *of high caliber and quality

- *no longer than 3 minutes. It can be much shorter.

- *irresistible.

- *labeled with your name, phone number and email address if you have one. Include slates on your reel with this information in case the label falls off.

- *a VHS cassette in NTSC format. This is the format almost all companies can deal with in the United States. Some companies now accept DVDs but VHS is still accepted by everyone. If you want to submit a DVD, check with the company first.

Keep it moving.

Put the very best segment first.

Don't expect your work to be returned. **Never** send your only copy to anyone.

Include slates on the tape or a written breakdown sheet that describes each scene and what you did for that segment. If you did everything, put in a note with the reel stating that.

A portfolio of life drawing, illustration, photography (if you are interested in lighting), sculpture (if you are interested in modeling), character design or color design is a big plus. If you have a fine art background, include some of the work with your reel. Include only your best work.

4 Conclusion

Whether you submit a demo reel, DVD or CD Rom, portfolio or all three, remember to always include a resume and breakdown with it.

Once you get that job, do the very best job you can every single day.

***Attitude** is of paramount importance.

*Being a **team player** is essential to keeping a job and sustaining your career.

*There is **no such thing as a small job**. **Do your best on every job** you get and your circle of fans will grow.

*Continue to **network** and **keep your resume, portfolio and demo reel up to date**.

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson is a recruiter/hiring strategist for such clients as Toybox, Framestore, Digital Domain, and Walt Disney Feature Animation. She is a career coach and consults with colleges and universities to design animation training programs. Her animation production background includes features such as *Bebe's Kids*, the Fox television series *The Simpsons*, and the original Amazing Stories episode of *Family Dog*. She writes a monthly column on Animation World Network (www.mag.awn.com) called The Career Coach.