

Resume Objective or Summary: You Need One, but Which?

Do I even need one?

Yes.

The Objective or Summary **helps describe the value you can bring to a would-be employer through your skills and experience**. It's much easier for a hiring manager to find that value in a short paragraph than to try piecing it together from a lengthy history of professional experience and education.

Objective or Summary?

You're better off with a Summary, unless you fall into one of these three categories of job seekers:

- You're just entering the workforce;
- You're re-entering the workforce after an extended absence; or
- You're changing careers.

Those who fall into these categories are usually the only ones who *do* need an Objective. Most other people's career objectives are easily determined from their work histories, so a Summary works better.

Isn't this best left for the cover letter?

You might say something similar in the cover letter, but if the company doesn't accept them, or the hiring manager doesn't bother to read it, at least the resume can communicate your value.

What should I say?

Too many job seekers continue to write Objectives and Summaries that focus on what *they* want their next jobs to do for *them*. But frankly, that's not the priority for most employers. It's all about the employer: What can *you* do for *them*? So, your statement must focus outward, showing hiring managers what they stand to gain by hiring you.

Pull out the most relevant highlights of your professional history and present them in a brief, high-impact statement. Avoid personal pronouns (I, me, my) and remove unnecessary words. And don't write complete sentences.

Compare the following two Objective statements, and notice how the employer-focused Objective is more likely to grab attention:

WRONG: Job Seeker-Focused

OBJECTIVE: A position in corporate procurement in the retail industry that can utilize five years of negotiating and research skills and eventually lead to a management-level role.

RIGHT: Employer-Focused

OBJECTIVE: A position in corporate procurement that can utilize skills in research and negotiating gained from 5 years of experience in another industry, helping a retailer cut costs and improve its competitive position.

Here's an example of a well-written Summary statement that says a lot about the value the candidate brings to the table.

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY: Corporate procurement professional with 10 years of experience in the high-end retail apparel industry. Highly skilled at performing due diligence on potential suppliers around the globe, negotiating contracts, controlling corporate risk, and minimizing costs. Fluent in French and Spanish.

How long should it be?

No more than 50 words. You want to be succinct and straightforward. Anything longer might make the hiring manager *stop* and not bother to read the rest.