

PROFILE OF PROFESSIONAL RÉSUMÉ WRITERS



**WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE CHARGE,
HOW WE WORK**

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Profile of Professional Résumé Writers (2015)

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Profile of Professional Résumé Writers (2015)

The Résumé Writers' Digest Annual Industry Survey is an opportunity for résumé writers to benchmark their progress compared to their peers. The survey was first conducted in 2001. Due to small sample size, this is not a scientific survey. However, the results can be informative and instructive to give you a peek into how other résumé writers work.

The 2015 *Résumé Writers' Digest* Annual Industry Survey was conducted from May 2015 into June 2015 and the results were reported in December 2015. One hundred six résumé writers contributed to the survey data. They spent an average of 11 minutes answering 21 questions in the survey.

The respondents can be categorized as follows:

More than fifty percent of survey respondents are full-time self-employed résumé writers, including subcontract work. Twenty-two percent are self-employed part-time. Anecdotal evidence suggests many of those working part-time have full-time jobs in university career offices, as a recruiter, or working in human resources.

Ninety-one percent of those who took the survey are located in the United States.

The survey respondents are not “newbies.” Only six percent of survey respondents have been in business for fewer than two years. More than 70 percent of those responding have been writing résumés for more than six years. More than a fourth of survey respondents have been writing résumés for more than 20 years.

The pricing data reflects the “veteran” nature of survey respondents. Generally, résumé writers who have been in business the longest charge the most. (Those who don't charge enough to support themselves in their résumé writing business generally leave the industry.)

Where We Work

Seventy-five percent of survey respondents report they work from a home office, with another 14 percent having both a home office and business office. Only eight percent work from a business office (not located in a home), which is a stark contrast from the early years of the *Résumé Writers' Digest* Industry Survey, when a home-based résumé writer was the rarity.

The number of résumé writers who work with clients virtually has steadily increased over the past few years. In this year's survey, 31 percent of résumé writers say they *only* work with clients virtually. Forty-five percent say they work with clients in person and/or virtually, with another 13 percent who say they meet with clients in person, either at the résumé writer's home or office.

The number of résumé writers who use a combination of a phone consultation *and* questionnaire to gather information from clients has risen slightly from the previous survey. Thirty-five percent of survey respondents report using this combination, while 21 percent only use questionnaires.

Services

The survey revealed that participants write an average of three résumés a week — a number that has been fairly consistent over the past few years in the survey. Writers reported spending an average of 24 hours a week on résumé development (including client consultations, research, writing, and finalization) — the same number as in the previous survey.

The busiest month, according to the survey, is January, followed by September. In the previous survey, February was second-busiest. In this year's survey, February, March, and April tied for third.

Let's Talk Pricing

The most common hourly rate cited was \$150 in this year's survey, double the number in the previous year's survey (2012). The hourly average this year is \$105.64, a 14 percent increase from \$90.87 reported in 2012, and up from \$83 an hour average in 2011.

The average reported price for a résumé and cover letter in 2015's survey is \$603.82, which is up almost 20% over 2012's figure. The most frequently-cited amount charged for a résumé and cover letter was \$350, which was up from \$300 in 2012's survey.

LinkedIn profile development services are becoming a bigger part of the "average" résumé writer's typical sale, followed by preparing additional résumé formats (ASCII and PDF), creating references pages and other supporting documents (thank you letters), and brand development services. Social media profile development (outside of LinkedIn) has declined since the 2012 survey.

The trend towards collecting full payment up front continues to increase in the résumé writing industry. Seventy-two percent of those surveyed require full payment up front (up from 70 percent in 2012 and 61 percent in 2011). Thirteen percent collect a deposit up front, with the balance due when the draft is delivered, or upon finalization (down from 19 percent in 2012).

Speaking of finances, 53 percent of résumé writers surveyed report they have no passive income streams currently. The good news is, this is nine percent lower than in the 2012 survey, meaning more résumé writers have added passive income to their career services business in the past three years. The biggest increase in this area has been in generating referral fees from other résumé writers for referring clients to them. Twenty-one percent of résumé writers surveyed report they generate passive income from these types of referral fees.

Nine percent of those surveyed say they sell their own information products, and seven percent have developed a passive income source involving affiliate income — either Amazon commissions, ClickBank income, and/or individual affiliate program payments.

Marketing is often listed as one of the top challenges of résumé writers, so it can be useful to learn how other résumé writers secure their clients:

- Referrals – 17%
- Website – 13%
- Social Media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter) – 13%
- Directory of Professional Résumé Writers on Professional Association Websites – 7%
- Networking – 7%
- Organic Search (not paid ads) – 6%
- Community Outreach/Unpaid Speaking Gigs — 3%
- Strategic Alliances – 3%
- Recruiters – 3%
- Public Relations/Being Interviewed – 2%
- Blog – 2%
- Yellow Pages – 2%

The percentage of résumé writers reporting they get new clients via their website is down three percent from the previous survey, while LinkedIn (and other social media) is up six percent. Yellow Pages advertising, not unexpectedly, has declined from five percent to two percent. Strategic alliances are down from five percent to three percent. Recruiter referrals also dropped three percent from 2012's figures. Blog traffic as a source of new clients also dropped from four percent to two percent.

Networking — not surprisingly — is a good source of business, generating seven percent of business. Unpaid speaking engagements and community outreach account for three percent of new clients, and public relations/publicity generated another two percent.

Certification and Training

Most résumé writers surveyed are a member of at least one professional association. Memberships included:

- The National Résumé Writer's Association – 14%
- Professional Association of Résumé Writers and Career Coaches – 13%
- BeAResumeWriter.com – 13%
- Career Directors International – 9%
- Career Thought Leaders – 13%
- Resume Writing Academy – 8%
- The Academies – 5%
- National Career Development Association – 4%
- JibberJobber.com – 3%

Membership figures have stayed pretty consistent from the 2012 survey. (We consider the “traditional professional associations” to include the NRWA, PARW/CC, and CDI, while the other organizations listed provide training and other membership benefits, but are not traditional professional associations.)

Forty-four percent of survey respondents report they are certified as résumé writers, with another 10 percent saying they have a coaching certification. Twenty-five percent report they are dually certified in résumé writing and career coaching, while 20 percent are not certified.

Professional development is important to the survey participants:

- 10% – Participated in a paid webinar on a career-related topic
- 9% – Participated in a free teleseminar on a career-related topic
- 9% – Participated in a free webinar on a career-related topic
- 9% – Purchased one or more career-related books
- 7% – Participated in a paid teleseminar on a career-related topic
- 6% – Attended a professional association conference

What Don’t You Like?

Many years, there is one big “theme” in the answers to the question, *“What is your least favorite part — or biggest challenge — of being a résumé writer?”* This year, there were several themes: marketing/sales, challenges around the actual résumé writing process, pricing/money issues, time management, client management hassles (the word “PITA” was used repeatedly), and the need to educate clients on the job search process.

The best way to illustrate these themes is through quoting specific responses. Sound familiar?

- “Convincing prospective clients that it is in their best interests to retain a professional résumé writer.”
- “Doing sales and trying to write at the same time. Too many interruptions.”
- “Biggest challenge is preventing high-end clients from taking advantage of me. Setting boundaries with people who are used to getting their way.”
- “My least favorite part is doing business-related tasks (paying bills, software repair, buying supplies...).”
- “Time. I get an influx of projects due to referrals, and personal issues or technical issues create delays that snowball into fiascos. I’m currently in one now.”
- “Converting prospects to clients.”
- “People do not understand that a great résumé could get them a \$50,000/year job and they may only want to pay \$50 for it.”

The other top themes:

- The isolation of being a solopreneur
- Challenges of finding good subcontract writers
- Working with clients who are undecided about their career path

Profile of the “Average” Résumé Writer

Based on survey results, here is the profile of the “average” résumé writer:

She (the majority of résumé writers are female) is in her mid-50s, and has been writing résumés for 10-12 years as a self-employed résumé writer. She is a Certified Professional Résumé Writer (CPRW) and is a member of either the Professional Association of Résumé Writers and Career Coaches (PARW/CC) or the National Résumé Writer’s Association (NRWA), and has received résumé writing-related training from one or more of the other organizations — either BeAResumeWriter.com, The Academies, Career Thought Leaders, and/or the Résumé Writing Academy.

Our average résumé writer works from home almost exclusively. She spends 25-30 hours a week writing, and another 15-20 hours a week on administrative and marketing activities. She writes 2-3 new résumés a week, and works on 1-2 updates weekly. Her average package — for which she charges \$350 — includes a résumé, cover letter (including additional résumé formats — ASCII text, PDF) and, in more than half of the projects, some LinkedIn profile development services. (LinkedIn is becoming a more “standard” part of the services she offers, although she charges extra for that — usually an extra \$150 on top of the résumé and cover letter.)

She also offers some type of coaching services — either job search coaching, interview coaching, or general career coaching. Usually this is “one-off” coaching (a single session — usually conducted by telephone — for between 20-60 minutes), and is included in the price of the résumé/cover letter package, and not as a stand-alone service sold to the client.

She collects 100% payment upfront and uses a combination of a questionnaire followed by a brief phone consultation to gather information from the client.

Her biggest frustrations revolve around money — pricing her services (and finding clients who are willing to pay the rates she is charging!) and how to earn more in her career services business without working more hours (how to generate more money from passive income/recurring revenue). On her to-do list for 2016: Updating/overhauling her website (including learning about SEO) and creating an ebook to give away and/or sell.

Technology also continues to be one of her biggest challenges — from choosing a customer relationship management (CRS) system for her business to understanding the latest changes in Applicant Tracking Systems technology and how that affects the résumé she writes.

As for income, she brings in gross revenues of \$4,800-\$5,600 each month, and she nets around \$53,000 a year after taxes.

Information compiled/analyzed by Résumé Writers’ Digest/BeAResumeWriter.com

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<http://www.rwdigest.com>

<http://www.bearesumewriter.com>

Resources for Résumé Writers

Are you familiar with these resources that can help you as a résumé writer?

Books/Ebooks/Special Reports

[Start, Operate, Profit! The Ultimate Resource for Building a \\$100,000 Résumé Writing Business](#)
(3rd edition) – \$44.95

Teena Rose's excellent book to help you start or grow your résumé writing business — "the definitive resource for those getting started or who want to be the best they can be." The book's contents encompass business structure and naming, business planning, marketing and advertising, pricing, customer relations, résumé writing strategies, add-on products, and more. You can also visit the link to receive a free 19-page preview of the book. Available for immediate download as a digital file.

[Making Money as a Résumé Subcontractor Special Report](#)

Looking to earn extra income as a résumé writer? Subcontracting can be an excellent source of supplemental income. This 45-page special report includes profiles of résumé writers who subcontract, information on what subcontractors pay, how to contact them (including a sample cover letter and résumé), results of the *Résumé Writers' Digest* Subcontracting Survey (average compensation, turnaround time, workstyle, etc.), keys to success (from the contracting writer's perspective), what to look for in a contract, and more than 30 listings of contracting individuals and firms (including requirements, workstyle, turnaround time, compensation, and more).
[Note: The report is currently being updated for 2016.]

[Write Great Résumés Faster](#)

Make more money with less work! Are you ever stumped on where to start when writing a résumé? Do you keep track of how long it takes you to write a résumé? Looking for ideas on how to create better résumés to win your clients an interview? How much more money could you make if you could write résumés even just a little bit faster than you do now — without sacrificing quality? This special report contains hundreds of ideas and resources compiled by Bridget (Weide) Brooks, CPRW. Hundreds of copies of this book have been sold to résumé writers — many consider it an "indispensable resource" they use for inspiration when they get stuck. Available for immediate download. (Completely updated fourth edition.)

[Developing Strategic Alliances and Partnerships With Recruiters](#)

Are you thinking about developing a referral relationship with a recruiter, but are wondering where to start, and how to structure it? This special report has the answers. Topics covered include: How to find recruiting firms to partner with, questions to ask a recruiting firm (or to research) if you are approached for a referral relationship, what operations issues you should consider (like how to track referrals, compensation, and scope of commissionable work), how you should decide what to pay for a referral (and when you might not have to pay for high-quality, new clients at all!), Contains case studies from actual résumé writers. Available for immediate download.

Jobseekers Are Hungry For Information...**Feed Them!**

*Done-for-you content you can give away,
sell, publish, print, post & more...*

Topics Include:

- Applicant Tracking Systems
- Working With Recruiters
- What To Do When Your Job Search Isn't Working
- Conducting a Confidential Job Search
- Leaving Your Job/Getting Fired
- LinkedIn
- Salary Negotiation
- Avoiding Job Scams
- Assessing Job Offers
- Informational Interviews

PLUS: Career Checklists • Client Management Forms • Tweetable Tips • 30-Day Challenges



www.bearesumewriter.com/doneforyou

Pass-Along Materials are done-for-you content you can give away to prospects or clients or turn into information products (ebooks, teleseminars, webinars) to sell. Content is provided in Microsoft Word format so it is easily editable. Use it “as is,” or customize it or simply use it as a jumping-off point for creating your own content on these topics.

Most popular topics include:

[Getting Started With LinkedIn In Your Job Search](#)

[Jobseeker's Guide to Applicant Tracking Systems](#)

[Jobseeker's Guide to Salary Negotiation](#)

[What To Do Next With Your Résumé](#)

[Position Yourself to Get The Job](#)

[Jobseeker's Guide to Virtual Interviews](#)

[LinkedIn Profile Delivery Document Template](#)

[Jobseeker's Guide to Connecting With a Hiring Manager](#)

[Jobseeker's Guide to Creating a 30-60-90 Day Plan](#)

[What to Do When Your Job Search Isn't Working](#)

[The Jobseeker's Guide to What To Do After The Interview](#)

See the full list of available Pass-Along Materials topics here:

BeAResumeWriter.com/doneforyou

Special Reports:

[Developing Strategic Alliances and Partnerships With Recruiters](#)
[Feed the Media: How to Get Free Publicity For Your Résumé Writing Business](#)
[Securing Referrals: How to Get Other Résumé Writers To Refer To You](#)
[Sell Your Information Product in 72 Hours](#)
[The Passive Income Project](#)
[Brand Your Résumé Business](#)
[Attract Your Ideal Résumé Client](#)
[Pricing Your Résumé Services for Maximum Profit](#)
[First Call Questions: Questions for Résumé Writers to Ask Prospective Clients](#)
[What Should I Write About? Tips for Topics for Blog Posts, Articles, and Social Media Content for Résumé Writers](#)
[Résumé Writer's Guide to Selling Premium Packages](#)

Find more ebooks and special reports here:

[BeAResumeWriter Resources](#)

Membership Associations

[BeAResumeWriter.com](#)
[Career Directors International](#)
[Career Professionals of Canada](#)
[Career Thought Leaders](#)
[CertifiedResumeWriters.com](#)
[The National Résumé Writers' Association](#)
[Professional Association of Résumé Writers and Career Coaches](#)
[Reach Personal Branding](#)
[Résumé Writing Academy](#)
[The Academies](#)

2016 Résumé Writing Conferences

[Career Thought Leaders Conference and Symposium – March 30-April 1 in Denver](#)
[NRWA Conference – Sept. 21-23 in Annapolis](#)
[Career Directors International Entrepreneurial Success Secrets Live – October 2016](#)

Teleseminars/Webinars

[BeAResumeWriter.com](#)

Offers free teleseminars each month on a variety of business management and résumé writing topics. You do not have to be a member of BeAResumeWriter.com to register for the calls; however, Free Level members have access to a streaming audio recording of the most recent call, and Bronze members have access to downloadable recordings and fully edited transcripts of all previous teleseminars.

[Career Thought Leaders/Résumé Writing Academy](#)

Offers quarterly “E-Summit” training programs on résumé writing topics. You can also purchase recordings of past programs. Solid (“meaty”) information in each program, backed up by thorough handouts. Well worth the price (\$69/program).

[The National Résumé Writers’ Association](#)

The NRWA offers monthly educational teleseminars, with special pricing for members. Some programs can also earn CEU credit towards NCRW certification and renewals. You can also purchase recordings of past programs.

Training Programs

[7-Step Product Creation](#)

This self-study course walks you through the seven steps to create your first (or next!) information product (ebook, special report, teleseminar, webinar, live course, etc.), including identifying what type of product to develop, targeting your audience, creating the product, setting up the sales system, and launching the product.

[Career Membership Sites Made Easy](#)

Start your own membership site with just one article. Earn passive income and recurring revenue while serving your jobseeking clients more effectively.

[Get Clients Now!](#)

A six-week live program to help you fill your appointment book by doing up to 10 things daily/weekly. Includes two calls to learn the basics of the program and then four weekly coaching calls coinciding with a 28-day implementation of your personal Action Worksheet. Offered only as a live program.

[Résumé Writer’s Affiliate Income Blueprint](#)

The easiest way to get started with passive income is affiliate marketing. Learn how to incorporate affiliate marketing into your work with your existing clients and get access to a pre-screened Directory of Affiliate Opportunities to choose which products, programs, and services to promote. Offered only as a live program.

Other Resources

[1&1 Domain Name Registration and Website Hosting](#)

Affordable, easy-to-use domain name registration (starting at \$12.99/year for domains, and \$6.99/month for hosting). You can register multiple domain names and point them all to one website easily, allowing you to promote your different services and products but drive traffic (website visitors) to specific pages of your main website.

[AWeber E-Mail List Management and Autoresponder](#)

Every résumé writer needs to build a mailing list with very little technical know-how. AWeber walks you through the process of creating your opt-in form (and will even host it on their site for you, so you don’t even need a website to get started with building your mailing list).

AWeber offers both autoresponder messaging (you can pre-schedule a series of emails to go out at designated intervals when people join your list) and broadcast emails (send a message whenever you want). Your first month is just \$1, and just \$19/month after that (for up to 500 subscribers).

[Audio Acrobat](#)

If you host free or paid teleseminars, are interested in podcasting, or want to create audio training programs, check out Audio Acrobat. Offers complete ease in creating and hosting audio clips — no technical skills required! Do you do client coaching? Record the calls and offer them as a bonus to your client! And check out “sizzle lines” — record special content and give prospects or clients access. Free 30-day trial, then \$19.95/month for the Basic Plan.

[Clickbank](#)

An online market to bring buyers and sellers together. If you create an information product, Clickbank is a great way to find affiliates to promote your offer. If you’re looking for affiliate offers to promote, Clickbank is a great way to find relevant products to recommend. It’s also a great way to research what clients will be interested in — find products that are hot sellers!

[Constant Contact](#)

The most popular solution for building a mailing list. A more “user-friendly” email list management program than AWeber, its autoresponder function is much more limited. If you’re looking for a program that will allow you to easily create a client e-mail newsletter and the ability to send broadcast emails easily, check out Constant Contact. Offers a free trial (up to 100 contacts), and prices start at just \$20 for up to 500 contacts after that.

[Fiverr.com/Vikiana](#)

Need an ebook cover or website banner made? Check out Vikiana on Fiverr.com. Don’t be put off by the poor grammar on her page — she does excellent work, fast, and starting at just \$5.

[EventBrite](#)

The easiest way to offer free or paid registration for your next live or virtual event. There’s no cost to you if you don’t charge for the event, so if you want to host your first free teleseminar, consider using EventBrite. If you’re charging for the program (again, in-person or online), you’ll pay a small fee to EventBrite for each ticket sold, plus either a PayPal processing fee (if you want registration funds to go through your PayPal account) or you can use EventBrite’s credit card processing (with associated fees). Total fees add up to about 6% of sales, but you only pay for what you sell, and the registration pages are extremely easy to set up.

[Fotolia](#)

Fotolia is an extremely inexpensive way to acquire photos and illustrations. It’s a fabulous choice for photos to use to illustrate your information products (ebook artwork, for example) and blog posts, offering a massive amount of choices, starting at about \$1 per graphic.

Freeconferencing.com

My favorite solution for hosting free and paid teleseminars. It does offer screen sharing (with recording), but I use it for the phone-only option. Log into your account dashboard to see how many callers are on the line and to mute individual noisy lines. Doesn't offer as many "bells and whistles" as the paid services, but hey, it's free!

Payloadz

The easiest way to sell digital information products (ebooks, special reports, forms, guides, audio programs, etc.) online. The Payloadz Express option is for low-volume sellers and is a great way to get started. The full Payloadz option offers an affiliate program to help you find folks to promote your products, and their online store provides exposure for your products.

PayPal

Some people hate it, some people love it ... most just see PayPal as the easiest way to accept credit cards without having a full scale merchant account. I gave up my traditional merchant account so I wouldn't have to deal with the hassle of PCI compliance, and PayPal has been a great solution. It also processes recurring payments for BeAResumeWriter.com.

[Joan Stewart — The Publicity Hound](http://JoanStewart.com)

If you're looking for ways to get free publicity for your résumé writing business, you need to check out Joan Stewart's offerings. She'll teach you "tips, tricks, and tools" for free publicity.

[Robert Middleton — Action Plan Marketing](http://RobertMiddleton.com)

I've been using Robert Middleton's marketing ideas for service providers for years — he offers extensive training for how self-employed professionals can attract their ideal clients. His free, 24-page "Marketing Plan Workbook for Attracting Clients to your Professional Service Business" is the best guide to defining your ideal client and creating a client-attracting core marketing message that I've ever seen.

Upwork

Looking to outsource some things you can't — or don't want to — do yourself? Upwork (formerly Elance) is a great place to go to find project-specific vendors, including website designers, copywriters, transcriptionists, researchers, and more.

[Wild Apricot](http://WildApricot.com)

If you want to create a membership program for your résumé writing business, Wild Apricot is a simple yet robust solution that is also extremely easy to get started with. It offers a free, advertising-supported level all the way up to multiple professional levels (depending on the number of subscribers you have). No web design experience required.