

The Executive Resume Guide

The true purpose of a résumé is to open the door to an interview — nothing more. It is not a list of responsibilities or a sales pitch. By the end of this guide you should have a self-written report card that conveys your ability to drive change, deliver results, and sustain impact through culture.

Principles

The hiring company. In our search work, nearly every executive mandate is triggered by a problem the current team is perceived as unable to solve — so center your résumé on change delivered, not duties held: how you have driven change, improved culture, elevated performance, and brought teams together.

Length. Don't worry about length up front. Write in detail first, then refine. One to two pages for most roles; senior executives can run to two, occasionally three, if every line earns its place.

Tailoring & the keyword screen. Tailor to the role. Read the job description, note what it emphasizes, and cover those themes. Many résumés are filtered by software or a first-pass reviewer before a human reads closely — so mirror the role's key terms (modality, phase, function, systems) in your own words.

Style. Avoid large blocks of prose. The fewer words, the better.

Education, awards & languages. Place education at the bottom so the reader works through your impact first. List awards given in a professional context. List the languages you speak — languages convey adaptability.

Use the language of a change leader. Sell your experience with deliberate, senior adjectives: Key, Critical, Vital, Influential, Proactive.

A note on using AI

Use AI to draft and sharpen if you like — which tool you use matters far less than what you feed it. AI's habit is to generalize, and generic bullets read as noise to a hiring board. The most important thing is that your specific stats survive: the dollar impact, the percentage change, the headcount, the timeline, the site. Give the model your real numbers and make it keep them; never let it smooth your individual, quantified impact into vague competence.

Linguistic substitutions

Instead of...	Use...
Ran / Oversaw / Put into practice	Drove, Led, Implemented, Actioned
Team member	Subject Matter Expert / Team Specialist

Instead of...	Use...
Project	Change Program / Initiative
Created	Designed / Defined
Taught	Educated
Talked to	Presented
Big picture	Strategy
Day to day	Tactical
Reasons for a project	Business case for an initiative
Achieved support	Sponsored by / Secured buy-in from

Format

Header & objective. Name and address in the header. Objective: concisely explain the role you're moving into and a summary of your key attributes.

Career history — for each position: dates of tenure (e.g. Sept 2021–Dec 2024); company name; position title; org size; direct reports.

The contextualizing paragraph. Add an introductory paragraph to educate your audience on the environment you inherited and to add context to your results:

"Recruited by COO to take responsibility for the \$1.2Bn Transcatheter Heart Valves and Cardiac Surgery Systems business unit, becoming an active participant of the Senior Leadership team. Charged with restoring full functionality of a 300K sq ft facility in Draper, UT after the site received a 483 notice from FDA. Inherited a demoralized team besieged by hostile stakeholders and lacking both technical skill and motivation. Approached the task by introducing LEAN Six Sigma processes on an aggressive timescale, identifying and building key relationships across all stakeholders, re-educating the shop floor, and completing a top-down restructure of the management team. Achieved the following..."

Achievements — in X-Y-Z form. State the action (X), the metric change (Y), and the business impact (Z):

"Drove LEAN Six Sigma implementation across the top three product lines, delivering a 30% increase in throughput and adding ~\$400,000 to site revenue."

Clarify every statement. What was your track record across your last three roles — what did you inherit, and what did the function look like when you left? How did success show up on the P&L? Where did you champion new process, technical development, or cultural change? How did you operate in politicized stakeholder environments — who did you influence? What is your track record developing talent?

Close with: awards with dates; training & certifications; boardwork, memberships, and charity work with dates.

Using AI to build your résumé

The principle. Which AI tool barely matters; what matters is that your specific stats survive. You supply the facts; AI supplies structure and polish. Never let it invent a number, and never let it sand your quantified impact down to vague competence. You own every word.

How it works — one role, five categories. Work one role at a time and answer five short categories before the AI drafts anything: Context & mandate; Problems to solve; Actions & change initiatives; Metrics & results (% , \$, time, throughput, milestones); Commercial/P&L impact & team scale (FTEs, consultants, matrix scope).

Paste this into your AI tool:

You are an executive resume writer and search partner for senior life-sciences leaders. Your job is to open the door to interviews - not to list responsibilities.

How to work with me:

1. Work ONE role at a time, starting with my most senior or recent role.
2. For each role, ask me short, concrete questions to gather five categories, ONE category at a time. Do not draft until all five are answered with specifics:
 - a. Context & mandate - what I was brought in to do.
 - b. Problems to solve - the state I inherited.
 - c. Actions & change initiatives - what I actually did.
 - d. Metrics & results - the numbers (% , \$, time, throughput, milestones).
 - e. Commercial / P&L impact & team scale - business outcome, FTEs, consultants, matrix scope.
3. If an answer is vague or has no number, restate it and ask again for the specific figure before moving on.

Then draft the role:

- One tight context paragraph (3-4 lines).
- 3-5 bullets, each in X-Y-Z form: action, measurable result (my exact figure), and business impact.
- Use ONLY the facts and numbers I give you; never invent or estimate - leave a [placeholder] if a number is missing.
- Replace passive, task-based wording with change-leader language.
- Keep my specific detail (modality, phase, site, \$ and %); never generalize it away.

Compile the full resume only after every role is done, with Education at the bottom. Start by asking me about my most senior role - category (a).

Then iterate and verify. Answer each category with real specifics; if the AI drafts before you've given a number, make it wait. Check every figure against reality and complete any [placeholder]. Ask for a tailored variant per application, and cut anything that sounds generic.

The one guardrail. AI hallucinates. You are accountable for every claim on the page — verify numbers, dates, and titles, and never submit a line you couldn't defend in the interview.

Want a second set of eyes on your résumé? Phase 3 Search reviews executive résumés for the CMC, Quality, and Technical Operations leaders we work with. The review is the start — what we really bring is the map of live roles your résumé fits. If you're preparing for a move, send yours over. [Talk to Phase 3 → ph3.bio/contact](https://ph3.bio/contact)

Prepared by Alex Cooke, CEO, Phase 3 Search · ph3.bio · v2.0 · Jun 2026