

ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW

Cypress Resume

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Composite Score: ★★★★★ 1/8

Reviewed by: Dawn Behrend
Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, North Carolina

<dawn.behrend@lr.edu>

Abstract

Cypress Resume is an annual subscription resume writing software produced by Cypress Information Services. The product creates resumes, cover letters, and reference sheets with no additional writing skills required by the user beyond entering their basic information. Targeted users include K-12 schools, public libraries, higher education, and any institution assisting job seekers. Cypress Resume is competitive with Ferguson's Career Guidance Center and Testing and Education Resource Center (TERC) by Gale in providing resume and cover letter writing assistance, but suffers in comparison in its lack of ease of publication to the web and the absence of a job search engine. While a suitable product for a range of industries and job levels, the product may be less attractive to those who seek to create a resume with the individual feel and visual finesse to stand out as an applicant for more highly competitive positions. With its ease of use, range of job coverage, and competitive pricing, Cypress Resume is recommended for purchase by public, secondary school, and undergraduate academic libraries as a starting point for those entering or re-entering the job market.

Pricing Options

Cypress Resume is available by annual subscription. While exact pricing was not available, it was described as being "very reasonable" and starting at approximately \$300 for "very small libraries" (Waring, 2018). The user agreement prohibits a price raise exceeding 5% per annual billing cycle. Consortium discounts are available. Accounts are available for individuals as well as "institutions and government." Customers should contact Cypress Resume directly for quotes.

Product Overview/Description

Cypress Resume is a resume writing software that is designed to be a quick and easy tool to create resumes, cover letters, and reference sheets. While users have the capability to modify their documents with custom job statements or by editing the word document version, no original composition is required by the user. The target population for the product is broad, including job seekers in K-12 schools, public libraries, and higher education. As Cypress Resume requires that the user enter only their name, contact information, work history, educa-

tion, and certificates/training, there are very limited writing or computer skills needed to create a document. The product seeks to create a one-page document to gain the attention of potential employers rather than a curriculum vitae or more extensive resume.

Resumes are created in three steps. First, users enter their basic information (i.e., name, contact information, work history, and education). Second, users select their desired job title or skill set. There are over 100,000 professions to choose from as well as over 1,100 task groups. Third, users select prewritten professional job statements to include on their resume. The software automatically formats the document, adjusting the page layout and content volume. The site touts that "in a few minutes you will have a great-looking, well written resume that will give you an edge in today's ultra-competitive job market." Cover letters and reference sheets are also available. Resumes can be saved and published online according to the Cypress Resume website. Customer support is available via telephone Monday through Friday or within one business day via e-mail. The product offers a Spanish interface. JavaScript and cookies must be enabled for all web browsers.

Cypress Resume is accessible via remote access. A beta version of the mobile platform is currently in limited operation and allows the user to create a new resume, cover letter, or reference sheet as well as to access saved documents on the go. The product's website indicates that the software is "regularly updated." Users have the option to create an account and save their documents with continued access to edit or delete saved documents upon cancellation of their subscription. Usage statistics are available which provide the number of sessions (i.e., unique visitors) for a particular year, to-date for the current month, and for the life of the subscription. Promotional items including bookmarks, banners, posters, flyers, and social media images are available through the administration login.

User Interface/Navigation/Searching

From the home page, users have the choice to select Create Your Resume to begin Step 1 of the resume building process, Supporting Documents to create a cover letter or reference sheet, or Manage My Profile to log in and/or view saved documents (see Figure 1).

To create a resume, users can select from the Strictly Business or Editor's Choice templates. The Strictly Business template is described as

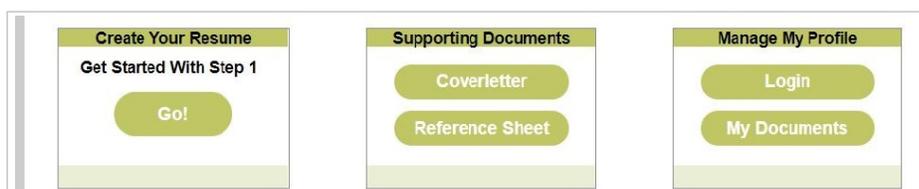


FIGURE 1 Cypress Resume Home Page Options

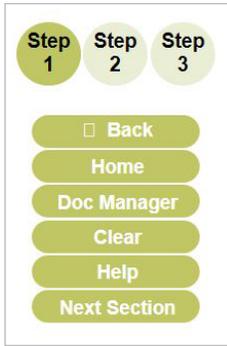


FIGURE 2 Cypress Resume Navigation Options and Status Indicator

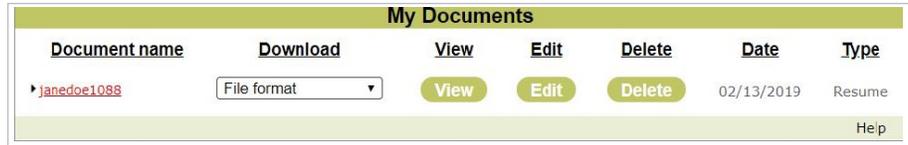


FIGURE 3 Cypress Resume Document Manager Options

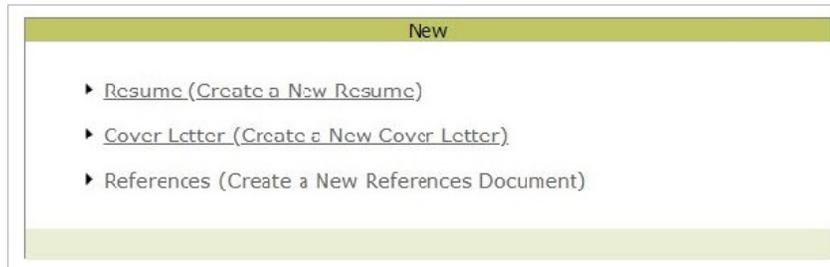


FIGURE 4 Cypress Resume Options to Create New Documents

“visually interesting” with the Editor’s Choice being a “classic, formal layout.” The side bar identifies which of the three steps the user is on and options to navigate to the previous page or home page, Doc Manager, clear their entries, obtain help, or go to the next section (see Figure 2). Users do not have the capability to move from one step to another, but rather must either go forward and backwards one section at a time.

Once a template is selected, the user is taken to the Main Form where their basic information can be entered. Items with an asterisk must be completed before proceeding to the next section. Step 2 is the Job Title Search, which can be searched by key word, industry, or job title. Once a job title is selected, a job description is provided. Upon selecting a job description, the user advances to Step 3 where job statements can be chosen to include in a resume. The user is directed to select up to a certain number of items from each section. The option to add a custom statement is also available. There are three sections: Professional Profile Statements; Software and Tools; and Skills and Abilities. The final screen where the completed resume can be obtained is the Document Manager.

To create a cover letter, users are sent to Step 2 of the resume building process to select a job title. As with the resume creation, the user selects a job description. The user then navigates to the Cover Letter page where name and contact information is entered. Two cover let-

ters specific to the job are generated as well as two additional cover letters that are generic to the majority of professions.

Finally, a user can create a Reference Sheet by entering name, contact information, and basic information about references including relationship to the applicant.

For all created documents, the final screen is the Document Manager which allows the user to view, edit, download, or delete a document (see Figure 3). Documents can be downloaded as an RTF (word processor), PDF, or plain text. The Help option provides further guidance related to managed documents.

At the bottom of the Document Manager page is a section entitled New, where the user can create a new resume, cover letter, or reference sheet (see Figure 4).

Critical Evaluation

Cypress Resume is a streamlined, easy to use product that fulfills its stated intention which is to create a professional resume in a short amount of time with limited required computer or writing skills. The product has broad applicability from high school students seeking their first job to seasoned professionals seeking a job change or promotion. Cypress Resume is unique in offering a stand-alone resume building software that is suitable for use by libraries, educational institutions, and other larger agencies through its provision of usage statistics, remote accessibility, and unlimited number of concurrent users. Cypress Resume is competitively priced and accessible in Spanish. The additional feature of generating cover letters and reference sheets enhances the product’s appeal for those who may struggle with the overarching job application process.

Despite its many strengths, there are concerns that may limit its draw beyond those seeking a bare-bones resume. The completed product is a basic Word document with little visual appeal. Once downloaded in Rich Text Format, however, the user can engage in further customization such as font style, font color, and other visual enhancements. The process of selecting the statements to create the resume can be cumbersome given that the sheer number of job statements

Free Text Keywords: Cypress Resume | resume writing | cover letter | reference | job | job skills | career readiness | Testing and Education Resource Center (TERC) | Ferguson’s Career Guidance

Primary Category: Other

Type of product being reviewed: Software

Target Audience: Secondary; General public; Undergraduate (including community colleges)

Access: Subscription



Cypress Resume Review Scores Composite: ★★★★★ 1/8

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content: ★★★★★ 1/2

Allows users to quickly create a basic resume, cover letter, or resume sheet in a cleanly formatted document with minimal requirement for writing skills. The product covers over 100,000 professions making it broadly applicable for most job candidates. The number of job statements for users to choose from can be overwhelming and time intensive. Some of the job skills to choose from are extremely rudimentary. When used with no customization by the user, the resulting document has a generic feel and is visually uninteresting making it unlikely to stand out to potential employers.

User Interface/Searchability: ★★★★★

Intuitive interface that requires only basic computer skills to navigate. Users cannot directly navigate between steps and the capability to publish a document to the web is not apparent.

Pricing: ★★★★★ 1/2

The product is a cost-effective option for a relatively low annual subscription. The product generated is quite basic and does not have a job search capability.

Purchase/Contract Options: ★★★★★ 1/2

Standard terms and conditions. The contract allows for unlimited usage and unlimited concurrent users. A more specific contract may be necessary for some institutions.

that are available to choose from can be overwhelming. In reviewing this product, I created a resume for a librarian and found one of the sections to have 87 statements from which I was instructed to choose eight. For a product that touts the creation of a resume “in minutes,” the time it takes to sort through so many job statements is contradictory. The statements tend to have a “cookie cutter” feel when used as is with no customization by the user and may lack the individuality that a potential employer is seeking in a job candidate. A number of the skills suggested are overly simplistic, such as “oral comprehension,” “near vision,” and “speaking.” Even for an individual applying for the most basic of positions, the use of such terms as “skills” would be nonsensical.

Beyond these issues, there were some discrepancies that may give pause. The home page spells the term “cover letter” as all one word, “coverletter.” While clearly an oversight, this very type of error would be unacceptable for a resume and gives a negative first impression of the product. Also, while the website for the product states that resumes can be published online there is no availability to do so. In using the help feature for the Document Manager, instructions were provided on how to publish a document to the web, but this did not match what was on the Document Manager screen which provided no such option.

An additional drawback of Cypress Resume is that it does not offer any job search or career readiness skills development beyond document creation. Whereas Ferguson’s and TERC each offer a job search feature and tutorials on building job search and career skills, Cypress Resume is notably lacking in this regard. This combined with the inability to easily publish one’s resume to social media or other website gives it the impression of being somewhat archaic and operating in isolation from the job search market in comparison.

A survey of public libraries indicates that over 92 percent of public libraries assist patrons in gaining access to career resources, over

77 percent assist their users in creating resumes, and 76 percent help patrons complete online applications for employment (American Library Association, 2012). As libraries of all types seek to provide accessible and relevant information resources for their constituents, career development tools are an ideal addition to a library’s collection to provide support to patrons in finding and applying for jobs. Cypress Resume is a cost-effective resume building product for a range of libraries and institutions seeking to meet the needs of job seekers. Its ease of use and accessibility make it suitable for use by libraries and an advantageous option when compared to stand-alone software or online products offering individual subscriptions. A drawback of the product is that its generality and lack of visual pizzazz may limit its desirability for users who are seeking higher level or more competitive positions. However, as a product that has the capability to generate a reasonably professional resume with a few clicks of the mouse at a competitive price it has much to recommend itself and fills a gap in the resume writing software market.

Competitive Products

There are a multitude of “free” resume software programs online that offer a free trial followed by a monthly subscription for the service. There are also numerous one-time purchase software programs to assist users in creating a resume. These products tend to be targeted at individual users rather than libraries or other institutional purchasers.

Two databases that have a resume writing component and can be considered more direct competitors in the information field are Ferguson’s and TERC. While Ferguson’s does not offer a resume building feature, it does have a number of sample resumes and cover letters that can be downloaded as a word document and used as a customizable template. Ferguson’s also has articles and videos on job search and career skills, and a job search engine. In comparison, TERC does include a resume writing component, Resume Builder, which covers

Contact Information

Cypress Information Services

Phone: (415) 746-0117
E-mail: <cypressresume@outlook.com>
URL: <<http://www.cypressresume.com/>>

over 40 industries, provides suggested phrases and keywords, and has the capability to e-mail, print, or post the completed resume to social media. Unlike Cypress Resume which contains pre-written job statements and generates a completed resume with no significant input required by the user, TERC's Resume Builder suggests phrases and key words that the user can then customize in a word document. The completed product is no-frills and similar to that generated by Cypress Resume. TERC also has a Virtual Career Library with modules on various career ready topics including cover letter writing and resume basics. Ferguson's and TERC are likely to be much more costly products as they include a suite of services with resume writing being a side feature. Cypress Resume is unique in being a stand-alone resume building software program that is available for a relatively low annual subscription and provides features, such as usage statistics and remote access, which are valuable for libraries of all sizes.

Purchase & Contract Provisions

The purchase contract/user agreement is brief and standard to the product. It is an institutional license which provides unlimited usage,

unlimited number of concurrent users, and remote access. The agreement is for one year (Waring, 2018).

Authentication

Cypress Resume offers all standard forms of authentication including library card, proxy, IP, and referring URL, and user name/password.

Author's References

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About the Author

Dawn Behrend is an Instruction and outreach Librarian at Lenoir-Rhyne University. Ms. Behrend holds a B.A. in Psychology, M.A. in Clinical Psychology, MBA, and MLS. She has over 20 years of experience as a clinical psychologist and is a second career librarian and serves as Lenoir-Rhyne University library's liaison to the departments of business and economics, mathematics and computer science, human and community services, psychology, and counseling. ■