

5 Ways That Job Seekers Sabotage Themselves With Their Resume



Resume writing is one of the first and also one of the most challenging tasks that professionals must tackle when beginning a new job search. Resume styles and expectations are continually changing, requiring the job seeker to take a fresh look at and sometimes completely rewrite her resume with each career step.

What should be included? What should be excluded? What is the most appropriate format? While these seem like relatively simple questions on the surface, they carry much more weight when you consider that an ineffective resume can prolong your search far longer than it needs to be and can be the cause of missed opportunities.

Here are some common but major mistakes that you should avoid when writing your resume.

1) Forgetting the employers' needs

Do not write all about you and what you want. Instead, think about your resume as if it is a marketing piece intended to promote you as the solution to a particular problem or need. The best and most powerful resumes illustrate by example how you have the ability to meet the employers' needs and will do so in a way that will be more effective and profitable than your competition in the job market. Writing a resume such as this requires that you do some research, to ensure that you understand the needs of the employers (or types of employers) you are targeting.

One of the most common examples of forgetting the employers' needs is the old-fashioned **“objective statement.”**



By definition, an objective statement tells the reader what you want from them. An example of what you should not write is this: “Seeking a technical sales position with a growth focused company that provides opportunities for advancement.” This objective statement is nothing more than a self-centered statement that is all about you and what you want.

Instead, write a profile section-also known as a qualifications summary section-that sets the focus for the document while calling out the qualifications and accomplishments that show how you will meet the employers’ needs. In many cases, these will be the qualifications that demonstrate how you will contribute in positive ways to their financial bottom line and/or the overall efficiency and performance of their organization.

2) Including everything but the kitchen sink

Do not include irrelevant details. Again, remember that your resume is a marketing piece meant to promote you as the ideal candidate for a particular job. You do not need to, nor should you, include every detail of your background and qualifications. Include only those aspects that are relevant and that help promote you for the type of position you are currently targeting.

For example, if you are applying for a nursing position the fact that you took software programming classes and held a part-time, temporary position as a programmer is probably not relevant and you should consider leaving it out or including it as just a footnote in your resume.



On the other hand, if you are applying for a technical sales position in which your technical background might be a plus, you should consider including it.

Besides diluting the focus of a resume, irrelevant data may cause additional problems for you, as it may leave the reader with the impression that you do not understand their needs and the nature of the position you are going after. Everything in your resume should have a purpose and support the main focus.



3) Focusing on just baseline qualifications

Baseline qualifications are the qualifications that are required for a position. It is important to show in your resume how you meet them. But these are the very same qualifications that the vast majority of your peers in the job market will have.

To differentiate yourself, to stand out, get attention, and generate invitations to interviews your resume must go beyond the baseline to illustrate how you-and the value you have to offer in the workplace-is different and special.

Do you have an uncanny ability to solve problems with outside-the-box solutions? Maybe you are an expert at redesigning business processes to increase efficiency. Perhaps you stand apart in your ability to build extraordinarily strong, loyal, enduring customer relationships.



These are all differentiators that would make a powerful and unique value proposition. Determine what is unique and special about you and promote it in your resume.

4) Overlooking results

Nearly everyone knows that effective resumes focus on accomplishments rather than on job responsibilities. The mistake many people still make is leaving out the results on their resumes. Every accomplishment has three parts: the challenge faced, the actions taken, and the results of those actions. The results are the actual impact of the accomplishment which can often be expressed in numerical terms. In other words, how the accomplishment made the employer money, saved them money, increased efficiency, or some other measure of performance, along with the actual dollar figures or percentage of increase that go along with these accomplishments.



Numbers are not just eye-catching and illustrative. They actually help lend credibility to your resume. Results are essential and leaving them off your resume can be a mistake that adds weeks or months to your job search.

5) Limiting your resume to a particular length

There was a time when job seekers, regardless of how much experience they had or what professional level they had achieved, were told that they must always limit their resume to a single page. This is simply no longer true. While you should be certain that your resume is on target, that every piece of data in it serves a strategic purpose, and that the writing is concise and to the point, it is virtually impossible to provide anything but the rudimentary details of a career (at least one longer than a few years) on just one page.



Two pages are not just common, they are necessary to provide the details of the accomplishments and results that will differentiate you in the job market. Further, in a majority of cases, two pages are expected. Providing just a single-page resume that is nothing more than an outline of experiences may actually work against you, hurting your credibility and leaving the impression that you don't understand what the employer is seeking and that you either don't understand or don't care about current business trends.

Your resume should not be taken lightly. It is a marketing document and in many cases it is your first and only chance to make a good impression. Job searches are stressful and costly.



Michelle Dumas runs of one of the longest-standing and most respected professional résumé writing firms on the internet, Distinctive Career Services, LLC (dba Distinctive Documents). Since 1996, Michelle has empowered thousands of professionals with résumés that get results and win jobs fast. Get insider résumé writing tips that you won't find anywhere else at her website. Go now to www.distinctiveweb.com