

Common Resume Blunders

As seen on msn.com

Make sure your resume is top-notch by avoiding the top 10 resume blunders:

1. Too Focused on Job Duties

Your resume should not be a boring listing of job duties and responsibilities. Go beyond showing what was required and demonstrate how you made a difference at each company, providing specific examples. When developing your achievements, ask yourself:

- How did you perform the job better than others?
- What were the problems or challenges faced? How did you overcome them? What were the results? How did the company benefit from your performance?
- Did you receive any awards, special recognition or promotions as a result?

2. Flowery or General Objective Statement

Many candidates lose their readers in the beginning. Statements like "A challenging position enabling me to contribute to organizational goals while offering an opportunity for growth and advancement" are overused, too general and waste valuable space. If you're on a career track, replace the objective with a tagline stating what you do or your expertise.

3. Too Short or Too Long

Many people try to squeeze their experiences onto one page, because they've heard resumes shouldn't be longer. By doing this, job seekers may delete impressive achievements. There are also candidates who ramble on about irrelevant or redundant experiences. There is no rule about appropriate resume length. When writing your resume, ask yourself, "Will this statement help me land an interview?" Every word should sell you, so only include information that elicits a "yes."

4. Using Personal Pronouns and Articles

A resume is a form of business communication, so it should be concise and written in a telegraphic style. There should be no mentions of "I" or "me," and only minimal use of articles. For example:

I developed a new product that added \$2 million in sales and increased the market segment's gross margin by 12 percent.

should be changed to:

Developed new product that added \$2 million in sales and increased market segment's gross margin by 12 percent.

5. Listing Irrelevant Information

Many people include their interests, but they should only include those relating to the job. For example, if a candidate is applying for a position as a ski instructor, he should list cross-country skiing as a hobby.

Personal information, such as date of birth, marital status, height and weight, normally should not be on the resume unless you're an entertainment professional or a job seeker outside the US.

6. Using a Functional Resume When You Have a Good Career History

It is irksome for hiring managers not to see the career progression and the impact made at each position. Unless you have an emergency situation, such as virtually no work history or excessive job-hopping, avoid the functional format. The modified chronological format is often the most effective. Here's the basic layout:

- Header (name, address, email address, phone number)
- Lead with a strong profile section detailing the scope of your experience and areas of proficiency
- Reverse chronological employment history emphasizing achievements in the past 10 to 15 years
- Education (New grads may put this at the top.)

7. Not Including a Summary Section that Makes an Initial Hard Sell

This is one of the job seeker's greatest tools. Candidates who have done their homework will know the skills and competencies important to the position. The summary should demonstrate the skill level and experiences directly related to the position being sought.

To create a high-impact summary statement, peruse job openings to determine what's important to employers. Next, write a list of your matching skills, experience and education. Incorporate these points into your summary.

8. Where Are the Keywords?

With so many companies using technology to store resumes, the only hope a job seeker has of being found is to include relevant keywords sprinkled throughout the resume. Determine keywords by reading job descriptions that interest you and include them in your resume.

9. References Available

Employers know you have professional references. Only use this statement to signal the end of a long resume or to round out the design.

10. Typos

One typo can land your resume in the garbage. Proofread and show your resume to several friends to have them proofread it as well. This document is a reflection of you and should be perfect.