

1 Day Résumés FREE Job Search Kit

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5 Résumé Mistakes That Can Kill Your Career

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by Kevin Donlin, Managing Editor - [1 Day Résumés](#)

As a professional résumé writer with 11 years of writing, hiring and managing experience, I've seen the same mistakes time and again in résumés.

Mistakes in your résumé can damage or even kill your career. Because a sub-standard résumé can prevent you from ever being called for a job interview.

But don't worry! If your résumé isn't 100% perfect, you're not alone. And help is just below, in this article.

Here are the five mistakes that ruin most résumés (and what you can do to prevent them).

Mistake #1: No objective or summary.

By not describing what job or field you want to work in, you start your résumé off on the wrong foot. Why? You force the employer to read it all the way through to figure out what kind of job you're suited for. You create more work for your busy reader. This is the last thing you want to do!

If you know the exact job title you're applying for, say so! Start the résumé like this:

OBJECTIVE

Marketing Manager, where 10 years of sales, marketing and management experience will add value to operations.

What if you don't know the job title? Start your résumé like this:

SUMMARY

Seeking a position where 10 years of sales, marketing and management experience will add value to operations.

By starting your résumé with a clear objective or a focused summary, you tell the reader exactly what you want to do for him or her. This establishes a rapport and sets the stage for the résumé. Which will greatly improve your results.

Mistake #2: Focusing on you and your needs.

This is the worst mistake you can make. Unfortunately, it's also the most common.

Look, no employer wants to hire you. Employers hate hiring! They only hire employees when they have problems to solve. And no employer wants to spend a lot of time hiring you, either, just as you wouldn't want to spend more time in

a dentist's chair than you had to.

So, your résumé must quickly answer the one question that's on every employer's mind: "What can you do for me?"

Unfortunately, most résumés don't.

Most résumés start out like this: "Seeking a position where I can utilize my skills in an atmosphere with potential for career advancement ..." And so on. This sounds fine and logical to the person writing the résumé. But it completely alienates the person READING the résumé. Because this person -- your potential employer -- has his own problems. He could care less about your career aspirations or desire to make more money.

Instead, tell the employer how you can add value to his/her operations, or contribute to efficiency. Notice this opening summary again:

SUMMARY

Seeking a position where 10 years of sales, marketing and management experience will add value to operations.

Now, what employer wouldn't want to talk to someone like you, who's offered to add value to his operations? You could also say: "... will contribute to operations" or "... will add to profitability." The exact words don't matter. What does matter is your focus on helping the employer meet his goals. If you do that, your career will advance and you'll make more money.

Mistake #3: Focusing on responsibilities instead of results. While it's important to tell the reader what you've done at each job, it's far more important to spend most of your time talking about what you accomplished and how you made yourself valuable to past employers.

It's easy to do. Just think back on your daily duties. What good things happened when you did your job well? Write them down! Focus on results. The more specific, the better!

Instead of saying this: "Responsibilities included (but were not limited to) implementation of policies and procedures, training of new employees, interfacing with subordinates and vendors, and light correspondence duties."

Say this: "Worked with staff and vendors to increase product turnover by 15% and sales by 23% in five months. Also trained 14 new employees, five of whom were rapidly promoted."

Mistake #4: Too many big words. It's a shame how often a good résumé is ruined when the author utilizes a superabundance of polysyllabic terminology, or uses too many big words.

Don't hide behind your vocabulary. When your résumé is not clear and to the point, the reader gets bored, time is wasted and your résumé goes in the trash.

Simplify! Write as if you were talking to a class of sixth grade students. That's the reading level all journalists are trained to appeal to in their writing. If it works for America's newspapers, it ought to work for you.

Instead of saying "implemented," try "adopted" or "set up," for example.

Never "utilize" what you can simply "use."

Don't "interface" with people; "work" with them.

And never use "impact" as a verb. (Meteorites hitting the moon are about the only thing that should "impact.") Try "affect" instead.

Mistake #5: Spelling/punctuation errors. Your spell-checker is not enough! You must read through the résumé once for accuracy (numbers, dates, city names, etc.), once for missing/extra words, and once more for spelling.

Then, show your résumé to several friends and ask them to read it out loud. Listen to where they pause; this could mean you've written something confusing or inaccurate. After you get their feedback, revise the résumé so that it's 100% error-free.

Cover Letter Strategies

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More of you write with questions about cover letters than any other topic. This week, I'd like to offer some excerpts from the book I wrote on the subject: "Guaranteed Cover Letters," which is now a FREE part of my latest résumé writing book, "[Résumé and Cover Letter Secrets Revealed](#)."

In a nutshell, your cover letter should say, "I'm the right person for the job. I have unique skills and experience that will help your company right away. I hope you're as excited about this as I am." The accompanying résumé should then prove your case.

Put another way, the cover letter is the advertisement for your résumé.

To get your résumé read, and to get that job interview, your cover letter must do the following six things.

1. Focus on the needs of employers and how you would solve their problems. Employers have problems. That's why they're hiring! Your cover letter should say (although not in so many words): "I'm the answer to your problems."
2. Display knowledge of the company. With the glut of information available on the Internet and most public libraries, you should be able to drop one or two facts/names into your cover letter to show you've done your homework on the company and its products, needs, challenges, etc. If you offer well-researched suggestions that will work right away for a company, they WILL call you.
3. Briefly state your best qualifications AND achievements. Don't spend a lot of time rehashing your résumé. But do include enough tidbits to generate interest in the mind of the reader.
4. Show your enthusiasm about the job. Avoid sounding like 90% of applicants, who say (not in so many words): "Give me a job where I can advance and make more money." Instead, convey this: "I'm excited about the possibility of bringing my skills to work for you."
5. State that you will follow up to schedule an interview. If you politely inform the reader that you'll be calling within a few days to answer any questions and schedule an in-person interview, you set yourself apart from the crowd with your determination and confidence.
6. Keep your letter short and focused. Most letters ramble on in excruciating detail for one or even two full pages. Show respect for the limited time your reader has and limit yourself to four, five or six paragraphs at most.

How to E-mail Your Résumé

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Many of you write to ask about how to e-mail your résumé to employers. The problem is often this -- sometimes, when you send your résumé to companies by e-mail, they write back saying the document was garbled or not attached to the e-mail correctly. If employers can't read your résumé, how are they going to hire you?

This can make you look all thumbs when it comes to technology. Worse, it can bring your job search to a screeching halt. So, how do you make sure your e-mailed résumé is readable?

Here's how.

Most people send their resume either as an attachment or in the body of an e-mail message. But, for maximum results and minimum headaches, I recommend that you do both.

First, send your résumé as an attachment. Almost all e-mail programs (Eudora, AOL e-mail, etc.) let you send attachments, which are documents that ride along with the e-mail. When the reader gets your e-mail, they can "open" (download and read) whatever document you have attached. Word for Windows is the most popular word processor (to my knowledge), so use this format for your attached résumé, if possible. WordPerfect is another good choice.

But attachments aren't foolproof. They may get scrambled during transmission and become impossible to open. Or, the reader may not have the same word processor as you, preventing them from reading your attached résumé. Then there's the old Mac/PC problem -- if your résumé was written in a Macintosh format, it won't be readable by a PC (and vice versa).

So, to make sure everyone can read your résumé, you should also copy and paste the text into the body of your e-mail message. In your word processor, simply highlight the entire text of your résumé, and copy it into the clipboard (short-term memory). Then, switch over to your e-mail program and paste the text into your message.

That's it! When you e-mail your résumé as both an attachment and with the text in the message itself, you can be certain that one way or another, your résumé will get read.

How to Uncover Job Leads

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All around you, there are jobs waiting to be filled. According to figures in the book, *Who's Hiring Who?* by Richard Lathrop, there are anywhere from one to three million new job openings in the U.S. every month. Every MONTH. So, where in the world do you find those jobs?

Want ads. While this is a popular job search technique, don't rely solely upon the Sunday classifieds to find work. Statistics show that a mere five percent of all job openings are filled this way. To avoid wasting your time, respond only to those ads you closely fit.

Ads in professional journals. Check your local library for journals related to your industry or profession. While there are fewer employment ads in such magazines than in a typical Sunday newspaper, they are more specialized, allowing you to focus your search.

Trade associations. Professional or trade associations can be a valuable source of job leads. Conventions, both national and local, are excellent places to build a network of people who may know of openings. Check your local yellow pages, or go to the library and consult the *Encyclopedia of Associations* for more information.

Other job hunters. There's always safety in numbers. Sometimes there's a job there, too. Many cities have job clubs or support groups where people can meet, network and share tips with others seeking work. You'll find out about who's hiring locally and who isn't. You may even get a referral from someone, which may lead to another referral . . . or a job interview. To find a job club near you, call your local library.

Networks. This is the most effective (and under-used) job search technique. Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job. Call every friend, relative and acquaintance in your address book. Perhaps one of them may be able to put you in touch with a decision maker in your line of work. Even your former employers can help. If you parted on good terms with your last boss, he or she might be able to refer you to other supervisors who can help.

Your goal is to get on the phone with someone who can hire you, schedule an interview, then meet to discuss their needs. An information interview such as this may lead to a job, if one is available. If your talents are impressive enough, a position may be created for you. Or, you may be referred to someone at another company. In any case, expanding your network circulates your name among people who can hire you, greatly increasing the odds that somebody will.

3 Secrets of Career Success

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Many clients come to me discouraged that they're working in the wrong industry ... or not working at all. But by being **specific**, **persistent** and **flexible**, you can get the job you want, with almost no competition. Here's how.

First, you must be **specific** about your ideal job. Do you want to work in high-tech? International finance? Marketing? Start by identifying several job titles and career paths that appeal to you. If you can't do that, at least list 3-4 skills that you'd be happy using every day.

Reason? You can't hit a target you can't see. By pinpointing a career, you can then pick companies that are the right fit for you. Even if those firms aren't hiring, you can make inroads by being **persistent**.

Do research on the Internet or in your local library to learn about your target company, its problems and competitors. Then, devise a solution (or two or three) to present to them. Visit the company and ask to meet with a hiring manager (get their name ahead of time by calling a receptionist).

By approaching that company as a problem-solver who is motivated and resourceful enough to put together solutions without being paid, you will be miles ahead of your "competitors" who do no more than ask for a job. If a job isn't available, one might be created for you.

But what if you need a job now, to pay the bills while you're pursuing your dream career? You can still make headway by being **flexible**.

Consider taking a temp job at an agency that employs people in your field. Specify that you want to do work related to your career goal. Once hired, use your lunch hours to identify problems and solutions. Seek out managers who can hire you full-time and ask to present your solutions. Eventually, you'll end up doing what you want for a company that you're happy with.

You **MUST** succeed if you follow these guidelines, because people who do more than what's expected of them always do. Just remember to be **specific**, **persistent** and **flexible**.

How to Follow Up Effectively

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This is a crucial and often-overlooked final step in the interviewing process. Remember: No home run or 350-yard golf shot was ever hit without a proper follow-through.

It's essential that you write a thank-you note to every person you met at the company. Your most important letter(s) should go to the interviewer(s). In your letter, be sure to summarize your conversation and re-emphasize the skills you would bring to the position. Thank them for their time and ask if it's all right to call later in the week to see how their search for a candidate is going. That candidate may well be you!

It can be frustrating to send out a dynamite résumé and cover letter for a job opening that perfectly suits you ... and then hear nothing.

But take heart. If the phone doesn't ring, you still have an option left.

You should send a follow-up letter. And possibly two or three. Because any job worth having is worth some extra effort on your part.

Here's how it works. If you don't receive a response within 7-10 days of sending your résumé and cover letter, send a follow-up letter with another copy of your resume.

Why can a follow-up letter be effective?

It gives you additional exposure. This is just plain marketing horse-sense. If you are out there selling yourself and your skills, it never hurts to keep your name and message in front of the buyer.

It demonstrates you are really interested. All companies, giant corporations and small mom and pop operations, like to interview people who are truly interested in working for them. Why would they want to interview someone who is indifferent? I'm surprised how many people forget this.

Companies assume that anyone who takes the time and effort to follow up must truly be interested in the job. Demonstrating this interest can cause the number of interviews you obtain to skyrocket.

FREE Thank-You Letter Template

Your Name

Enter your address here

Address line two

Phone

Email

EMPLOYER'S NAME

ADDRESS

ADDRESS

DATE

Dear NAME HERE:

I want you to know that I am extremely interested in the position of INSERT TITLE we discussed today. Based on the needs for INSERT DESCRIPTION you outlined in our talk, I am sure that my skills in INSERT 2-3 SKILLS can help you in this area.

In any event, I want to thank you for your time and consideration. It was indeed a pleasure to meet you and INSERT ALL OTHER NAMES.

Sincerely,

Your Name

The Web's Best Employment Resources

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Now, upload your resume at the following Web sites. If the site asks you to create a profile, just use your Guaranteed Resume as a starting point. It only takes a few minutes, it's FREE and it can really supercharge your job search! Point your browser here:

<http://www.gresumes.com/fd> (FlipDog special link)

<http://www.gresumes.com/hot> (HotJobs special link)

<http://www.recruitersonline.com/jobs>

<http://www.careerexchange.com/resume.htm>

<http://www.headhunter.net/JobSeeker/Resumes/AddResume.asp>

<http://www.joboptions.com/> (click on Post Your Resume)

<http://www.monster.com/> (click on Resume)