

5 resume mistakes OR How much is your resume costing you?

By Deborah Walker

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The Top 5 resume mistakes  
OR  
How much is your resume costing you?

Over the years as a recruiter, career coach and resume writer, I've seen the consequences of poorly written resumes. Unfortunately, many don't seek professional career help until they experience the frustration of a long and fruitless job search. For most, their problems began by committing the top five resume mistakes: lack of focus, absence of marketing strategy, no accomplishments, lack of keywords and incorrect format.

The most effective resumes have focus, leaving no question in the mind of the reader as to the job seeker's career objective. An early lesson I learned in my recruiting days was that employers turn down perfectly qualified candidates when the resume's focus is diluted. A one-size-fits-all resume gives the impression that the job seeker is uncertain of his career goal. An employer told me once that if a candidate is interested in two completely different positions, he must not be very good at either. If you have more than one career objective you need more than one resume.

The second resume mistake is the most common: lack of marketing strategy. Rarely do job seekers see their search for what it really is—a sales campaign. The best sales people use powerful marketing materials to help gain access to top decision makers. Think of your resume as marketing material designed to create a powerful first impression leading to a multitude of job interviews.

Translating your career history into an effective marketing piece means that your first consideration is the reader's buying motives. Every word on the page should demonstrate how you can solve their problems, save them time or money, increase their net profit or improve customer relations. Once you understand your resume as a marketing piece, you are a long way toward solving the third resume mistake: absence of accomplishment statements.

For any 100 resumes posted on any major job board, it's a fair bet that 90 of them are completely lacking in accomplishment statements. Accomplishments are what allow a prospective employer to

visualize you working in their organization. Accomplishments motivate employers to call you before their competition finds you. For top effectiveness, accomplishments must be stated quantifiably as dollars, percents or raw numbers. Quantified statements are more credible, concrete and objective. Investing time in writing out your accomplishments yields more bargaining power at salary negotiation because you have dollarized your worth.

Resume mistake #four, incorrect format, is easy to solve once you understand which format best supports your career objective. Basically, there are three fundamental resume formats; chronological, functional and hybrid. The chronological is best known and easiest to write. It allows the reader to easily identify the "what" "where" and "when" of your accomplishments. This format works well if your objective is to remain in the same industry or occupation and when your most recent experience demonstrate your best accomplishments.

The Chronological is not the most effective for showcasing transferable skills. If you wish to cross industry or occupational lines a better format is the functional which places transferable skills and relevant accomplishments at the beginning of your resume allowing a stronger first impression. One problem with the functional is that, if not carefully crafted, the resume is confusing; causing the reader to believe the candidate has something to hide.

A solution to the sometimes confusing functional format is the hybrid which combines the best of both chronological and functional. While the hybrid is generally thought of as the best overall format, it is also the most difficult to write. It requires strategic planning leading to a clear product branding message. This is no doubt the best format for executives of all levels.

Once your resume is focused with marketing strategy using powerful accomplishments and keyword and showcased in the most effective format, you are well on your way to gaining your career objective quicker and with greater confidence.

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Deborah Walker, CCMC provides Career Coaching and Resume Writing to executives nationwide. Accelerate your job search! Get your Free job search skills analysis at <mailto:Skills@alphaadvantage.com> Visit Deborah at her website at <http://www.AlphaAdvantage.com> or email at <mailto:Deb@AlphaAdvantage.com>
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