

Avoid these resume blunders

A resume in and of itself may not get you that killer job, but if you blunder in composing it, you might kill any chance for an interview. Here are some blunders, big and not so big, to avoid when putting your resume together.

- Lying about your experience. Augmenting your credentials with a little fiction might help you get the job, but you almost certainly will be found out. This could cause you to be fired sometime down the road. Worse, you will have gravely harmed your reputation within your chosen industry. Industry people travel in the same circles. It's highly likely that your employer will someday bump into someone who knows the real you, so don't say you were Phi Beta Kappa if you were a C student. Even a little white lie can backfire. Here's a real workplace example: An employee's company was relocating to another state, and people were offered severance packages if they did not want to move. This man used the company fax machine to send a resume to a potential employer. He listed his current position as chief information officer, when in fact he was not involved in technology at all and held a lesser title. He was found out because he left his resume in the company fax machine, where co-workers found it. Not only did he not get the new job, he lost the one he had, along with severance benefits he would have received.
- Typos and misspellings. You send a very negative message about your quality of work and attention to detail if your resume and cover letter aren't perfectly clean. Don't rely on your computer's spell check function. Your computer won't know if you negotiated with unions or onions. Review each word carefully, and have someone else review it too. Even if you are a good word person, it's easy to miss a typo because you know what you intended to write.
- Cutesy-pie layouts and stationery. Some people believe that their resume will stand out in the crowd if they stray from the conventional layout. This might work well if you are sending a resume for a creative job like a graphic artist and you know that someone is definitely going to look at it. It could work against you, too. In fact, some companies scan resumes into a computer for later review. If yours is too radical, it may not scan and you won't be considered at all. If you want to alter the color of your stationery, make sure the cover letter and resume are the same color. And keep it conservative - no hot pinks.
- Telling too much about yourself. Don't feel that you have to share personal information, and be careful what you do share. You might run into someone's bias, so avoid hitting those hot buttons. If you were president of the Young Republicans, your Democrat interviewer may not be impressed. Working for environmental or political causes won't impress everyone the same way. If you list golf as a hobby, someone might think you would spend too much time on the course. Even mentioning leadership roles at your place of worship could keep you from getting an interview. You can always discuss what's important to you once you are seated face to face, but don't deny yourself that opportunity.