



## Confessions of an HR Recruiter: You Need A Resume Overhaul

Nicole Cox August 19, 2016

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As a candidate in a very competitive talent market, you have a definite advantage—there are many [more open jobs](#) than there are qualified candidates in almost every profession. However, some résumé mistakes can chip away at that advantage. Based on input from seasoned recruiters, here are six tips for making sure it's easy to find you and match your qualifications to a [company's needs](#).

### **Simpler is Better**

Streamline your résumé to make it easier for search engines and applicant tracking systems to find and process it. Each system is different, but they all want to [parse your résumé](#)—to scan it and pull relevant information. To avoid confusing the parsing programs, don't use graphics, text boxes, fancy bullet styles or frilly fonts. Spell out acronyms. Rather than LOTS of keywords, use a handful of carefully chosen ones.

“Short and sweet” should describe your résumé as a whole as well as the different elements within it. With few exceptions, it should be no longer than two pages. Accomplishments are important (see “Highlight

Accomplishments,” below), but list no more than five under each position. In general, you’ll want to choose the most significant accomplishments, but also ensure they are relevant to the opening.

[Related: [Search Open Jobs In your City](#)]

### **Highlight Achievements**

While you want to be economical in presenting the information, recruiters are looking for proof that you [can deliver results](#). Provide meaty information . . . “led process improvements” is not enough. What processes did you improve? What was the impact on the company? What was your role in the project?

### **Make the Numbers Meaningful**

Substantiate your accomplishments with numbers. Some recruiters prefer to see actual numbers (such as “cut manufacturing costs by \$500,000”), while others prefer percentages (“cut manufacturing costs by 15 percent”). Either way, provide enough context to show the impact. If your objective was to cut manufacturing costs by 10 percent, make it clear that you exceeded the goal.

[Related: [7 Things Your Resume Is Missing](#)]

### **Cover Letter? Probably Not**

Unless a job posting specifically requests a cover letter, it’s best to forego it. We’re all dealing with information overload, and most of the recruiters we talked to confessed that they don’t spend much time with them at all. In addition, it might work against you; after all, it’s a full page of opportunities to make typos or grammatical errors.

If the posting requests one, follow the same guidelines you follow with the résumé: short and sweet. Think of it as an executive summary and limit it to one page. Customize it to the open position and company and quickly summarize how your background has prepared you to excel in the role. It’s better to skip the traditional greeting altogether than to start with a generic “Dear Sir/Madam” or (shudder) “To Whom It May Concern.”

[Related: [4 Cover Letter Blunders and How To Fix Them](#)]

## **(Dis)Close the Gaps**

People take career “breaks” for a variety of legitimate reasons, such as finishing school, starting a family or following a transferred spouse to a new city and state. The fact that there are [legitimate gaps in your work history](#) is not a problem. The problem occurs when you try to hide or gloss over it. Savvy recruiters will spot gaps, so don’t leave things to their imaginations. List the gap in the chronology with your jobs, with dates and a brief explanation. You can be creative, such as putting “Domestic CEO” as the title and listing “Successfully managed procurement, budgets and scheduling.”

However, too much information can be tricky and it isn’t really necessary. Personal information about age, relationships or children can expose you to discrimination. Employers aren’t allowed to ask for that kind of information, and you shouldn’t offer it. By the way, your résumé should match your social media profile; if there are disparities, it may cause a recruiter to think twice.

First impressions matter, and your résumé represents you and your career on the talent market. Whether you’re actively looking or just keeping your options open, you should optimize your market presence by optimizing your résumé.

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