**TOP NINE EXECUTIVE RESUME MISTAKES**

HR managers see these resume mistakes over and over again. Follow this checklist to make sure your resume isn't one of the clunkers.

Professional resume writers see hundreds of do-it-yourself resumes. Ask some of these pros, and they'll tell you they're so used to seeing the same missteps made over and over, they can spot them a mile away.

We talked to some of the certified professional resume writers who work with Ladders to find out which resume glitches they see most often and how to fix them. Before you send your resume out, check it against this list – once you've jumped over these potholes, you'll be ahead of the pack in this competitive job market.

1. Resume format

Steve Burdan, a CPRW who works with Ladders, said his clients often slip up by using a pure chronological or pure functional resume.

The problem: The chronological format by itself doesn't work "because you're making the reader work hard to figure out what you have to offer," Burdan said.

In other words, you're not highlighting your skill sets and areas of expertise. Hiring managers must read between the lines of the chronological format to fish out this information.

Similarly, a purely functional resume doesn't work "because you're not giving the reader any chronological context for any of your achievements," Burdan said. With this type of format, candidates typically have a section listing 10 to 15 bullet points that contain all their accomplishments stacked up.

"You don't know whether it was achieved 10 or 20 years ago, or the accomplishments have no explanation" or context, he said. Typically, the functional resumes Burdan sees are two pages, 90 percent of which comprise bullet points, he said.

The fix: Use a hybrid resume format that utilizes the best of both formats. The top part of this format is functional, with lists of skills and accomplishments. The following part places those accomplishments into context in a chronological section of job descriptions.

"The hybrid is what works for my clients," Burdan said. "When I get a client who says, 'What other versions do you have?' I'll say, 'I have no other models; this is the only one.' " (For more on crafting a hybrid resume, read here.)

2. No title

The problem: Many people neglect to give themselves a title at the top of their resumes, which will prevent the reader from understanding at a glance what position the person is looking for, said Mary Schumacher, another CPRW who works with Ladders.

The fix: Establish a descriptive, compelling title. One example of a title switch that packs more information: Change "Accounting," which is too vague, to "Management of A/R and A/P and Recordkeeping," which carries far more information and impact. (For more on crafting attention-grabbing titles, read here.)

3. Length

The problem: Amateur resume writers often go too short or too long. At some point, someone convinced them that every resume should be one page, so they try to stuff every thing into one page. "That's not going to work," Burdan said, because in choosing what to leave in and leave off, "you're cutting muscle." Executive resumes can be as long as three pages.

Likewise, if your resume is too long, you're just filling out space for the sake of fluffing it up.

"Writing a resume that is four pages long is simply useless – no one wants to read that much, and nobody really cares what you did in 1973," Schumacher said.

The fix: Burdan said that 90 percent of the time, it's appropriate to keep a resume to two pages. (For more on cutting your resume to the right size, read here.)

4. One-size-fits-all resumes.

The problem: Resume customization for a specific position is crucial these days, as the competition for jobs is fierce.

The fix: Use the same keywords as the position described in the job post, Schumacher advised.

"When you write a resume for posting on a job board or for a recruiter, scan a number of position announcements for your career goal and make sure your resume reflects most of their keywords," she said. (For more on how to customize your resume for the right job, read here.)

5. Lack of quantifiables

The problem: Job seekers often omit quantifiables that would substantiate claims about their skills and accomplishments. Instead, they take refuge in murky language like "improved performance" and "led a winning team." Everybody's got quantifiables, Burdan believes – you just have to figure out how to translate them. Otherwise, your resume suffers from a bad case of "so what?"

The fix: Quantifiables are translated in different ways for different job roles. A sales function is easy to quantify, Burdan said, because you can use numbers or percentages to reflect your increased sales or increased domination of a given market. Likewise, with marketing, a resume can list specific product launches.

CPAs can point to specific processes made more efficient and to specific amounts of money saved, Burdan suggested. IT professionals can list expertise with specific software packages and applications, as well as successful deployments and business-cost savings due to technology enhancements. Operations professionals can talk about cost controls and productivity increases.

6. Weak verbs and no verbs

The problem: Schumacher all too often sees weak verbs on do-it-yourselfers' resumes. She cites such lackluster verb constructions as "was responsible for," "provided" or "assisted with."

Even worse than weak verbs, some people don't use verbs at all when they write resumes, Schumacher said.

"Their bullet points start off with [verb-implying nouns], saying something like: 'Project management and process improvement' or 'Implementation of process controls and standardization procedures,' " she said.

The fix: Use verbs instead of sentence fragments that omit them. Your resume will be more action-oriented and dynamic. And avoid weak verbs by using action-oriented verbs such as "spearheaded," "steered" or "influenced." (For more on how to use verbs in your job search, read here.)

7. Overusing words

The problem: Another word-choice problem is that people will use a perfectly good word, like "develop," but then use it over and over again.

The fix: Mix up your verbs. Some verbs Schumacher likes include "enrich," "fortify," "forge," "transform" and "galvanize."

"These words are really powerful," she said.

8. Font faux pas

The problem: People often split hairs over the least important things, such as mulling over what the most effective font is, Burdan said. They also mix up fonts, particularly when cutting and pasting material from Web sites, and then neglect to make the pasted-in material the same font as the rest of the resume.

The fix: When it comes to fonts, Burdan advises clients not to go crazy. Stick with the tried and true: Times Roman, Garamond and Tacoma are all safe choices. Proofread to make sure fonts are consistent throughout. (For more on how to format your resume, read here.)

9. Graphic crimes

The problem: Photos on resumes. They're a bad idea, Burdan said, since resumes inspire enough snap decisions without having your picture on them.

"Resumes by nature are polarizing: Readers will either be attracted or repulsed by your resume. It's business, not personal: Every reader is looking for something different," he said.

He tells his clients to remember that resume readers are making go or no-go decisions "all the time," so it's safest not to give them a reason to pass over your resume by having a superficial reaction to your photo.

On top of that is the technical reason for keeping photos off a resume: Namely, graphics files tend to choke applicant tracking system software.

Finally, legal issues lead many human-resources departments to reject all resumes containing photos to avoid accusations of discrimination.

The fix: Keep photos or graphics off your resume.

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