

Your Resume – Gone in 60 Seconds (Part 1)

By A.J. Bond

Writing a Resume can be a labour of love, but all too often in today's uncertain economic climate that love can go unrequited when it comes to job applications. If I had a dollar for each time a client said they had not received a response to a job application, I would be considerably wealthier.

Like a first date, it is critical to make a first good impression when it comes to writing a resume. Employers and recruiters tend to work on a strict 'love (or at least attraction!) at first site' policy, and if your resume is not up to scratch, you can expect immediate rejection.

Writing a good resume can be a challenge. In a few short pages the author is required to distil a lifetime of work experience, achievements and aspirations, whilst at the same time convincing a third-party of their value as a potential employee.

It is not unusual for applicants to spend a considerable amount of time drafting and redrafting their resume. And given the potential benefit a good resume can deliver – namely obtaining that desired job - the effort agonising over the right words, phrases and content is time well spent.

Given the amount of time and effort the author can spend writing a resume, many job applicants still entertain the notion that employers or recruiters will reciprocate, by spending a fair amount of time pouring over the details of their resume.

Unfortunately, this couldn't be further from the truth, especially when it comes to the first screening. With hundreds and potentially thousands of resume's to review, recruiters will typically give a resume short shrift on the first pass, as they attempt to cull the numbers to a manageable level. It would seem that when it comes to early resume screening, it is rather a case of 'wham bam' than a considered 'get to know you'.

In all probability, a recruiter will look at a resume and make a decision within the first minute, often within thirty seconds, regarding whether to accept or reject a resume. Due to the sheer volume of applications, employers and recruiters simply don't have time to **carefully** review all resume's first time around. They are actively looking to cull back the list of potential candidates, and will ruthlessly weed out those resume's that fall short of their expectations.

While it is understood that a resume needs to hit the mark on many levels, it is crucial **not** to give recruiters any obvious reasons to throw your resume on the early

reject pile. Below, I have listed a number of important items to address to ensure you avoid any obvious or glaring shortcomings, thereby making it harder for recruiters to exclude your resume in early screening.

While this is certainly not an exhaustive list of 'do's' and 'don'ts', the items discussed below capture a number of key factors responsible for early resume rejection;

Brevity – A concise resume is a good resume, and will earn early brownie points from the reviewer, while an overly long resume will have the opposite effect. If a reviewer has to go actively looking for key information, you will have already received your first black mark.

If you can comfortably capture information in a single page then do so. Even if you are highly experienced, try to keep the number of pages to a minimum. Recruiters are time sensitive and will penalise unnecessarily long resumes accordingly.

First Page Format– When it comes to writing a resume, the first page is ground zero. Before a reviewer even begins to read through the details of your resume, they will be making both conscious and unconscious assessments of the layout of the document. If competition is tough and you are competing with many well presented and written resume's, a flawed front page can often equate to rejection.

The first page of a resume should always present well. This can be tricky because you need to capture as much noteworthy information as possible, whilst keeping the layout neat and easy to read. You can achieve this by adhering to the brevity rule above, and also being ruthless with what to include/exclude. Too many resume first pages contain information that is either superfluous or could be included later in the document.

In terms of layout, there should be consistent use of headers, paragraphs, bullet points and white space to clearly delineate between sections of the document and key points highlighted. Along with use of appropriate font and size, the document should not only be easy to read, but should be easy for a reviewer to identify key information.

First Page Content – First page content of a resume will vary depending on the experience of the candidate and the role in question. The first rule of first page content is to ensure that you capture any critical information that might get you hired. There is no benefit in burying important information in the latter part of a resume, as it may never be looked at.

Article continued in 'Your Resume – Gone in 60 Seconds (Part 2)'