

The Worst Mistake You Can Make On Your Resume



Fact: Job hunters obsess about resumes. Who wouldn't? There's so much to get right--functional versus chronological; objective statements (pro and con);key words ;templates ; references; font size; white space; action verbs ;employment gaps; placement and style of bullets, typos, and whether to include hobbies (probably a "no" on that last one).

So much, in fact, that we often forget the most important ingredient of a really great, **interview-obtaining, new-job-snagging resume**: It needs to be written specifically for the job you're after.

Does that mean you have to do a new resume for every single position you apply for? Yes, that's exactly what it means.

Fear not, this is not as laborious as it sounds. You don't have to start from scratch each time. All you need to do is **edit--or refocus--your `master` resume to** sync with the job in question. How?

--First, read and reread the job description. Study it. Ponder it. Identify the words and phrases the employer uses to describe the position.

--Next, take a look your work accomplishments, certifications, education, and experience. You should be keeping lists of all this stuff. This is the raw data you draw on to craft your resumes and cover letters, too.

--Then ask yourself which of your credentials can honestly be described using the same words and phrases the employer uses in the job description.

--Finally, take those words and phrases and use them to describe yourself in your resume. From this point, all you have to do is plug in info from your master resume. See, it's not a total rewrite. In fact, most of your resume will stay the same. You'll find that customizing your resume gets easier each time you do it.

A few more thoughts to consider:

--If you use a career objective at the top of the page, it should include the exact job title of the position you're seeking.

--Remove experience/qualifications that have nothing to do with the job in question. You want to make it easy for employers to see the credentials they most care about.

--Try to figure out what credentials are of highest importance to the employer and put those first. Pretend you are in the employer's shoes and ask yourself, "What's my biggest need? What's most important to me about this job?" Talk to your mentor and contacts in the field. Try to find people who are already doing the job you want and ask them, "What is the most important part of your job?"

--If your past job titles are ambiguous, overly jargony, or don't obviously relate to the job you're applying for, rephrase them in laymen's terms--in a way that shows how those past jobs qualify you for this new job.

So, what's the worst mistake you can make on your resume? Failing to customize. It's a new employment market out there. A `cookie-cutter` resume just doesn't cut it anymore. You need to show your potential employer that you're applying for this job, not just any job. Good luck!