

Five Resume Pitfalls

Your resume is your marketing document. It should not only offer some of the sizzle that makes you attractive, but it should also supply your reader with plenty of steak to back up the fragrance. While content is the most important criteria, your resume should allow people to find you as well as know who and what you are without creating lingering doubts that you are inept or selectively honest. Omitting basic key information on your resume is the career equivalent of your doctor checking your blood pressure and heart rate, but not your cholesterol and triglycerides. Your reader lacks the total picture and draws inaccurate conclusions about you. Consider these five tips:

- 1. Naming Convention:** You have named your resume “resume.doc”, which allows you to find it quickly on your own hard drive. How does a search consultant or corporate recruiter find it when they have hundreds of others with the same name? I receive such resumes daily. Forcing a reader to rename your resume sets you apart as inconsiderate of others’ time, lacking etiquette and not focused on details. The most obvious name for your resume should be: LastNameFirstName.doc. If you have a common name, add your middle initial or a number that will separate you from the other John or Mary Smiths.
- 2. Address and Contact Information:** I receive periodic resumes of prospective TENG members that omit postal and Email addresses and provide only a mobile phone number for contact. Identity theft and privacy invasion threaten all of us, but as a recruiter, I don’t want to waste my time tracking down someone who won’t trust me with such essential information. If my search client wishes to avoid relocation costs, I initially contact only local candidates. If I don’t know where you live, I may waste your time and mine when I call.
- 3. Career History:** Omitting college graduation dates and early employment history marks you as someone concealing their age, period. Age discrimination still looms large as an issue but attempting to hide your age sets you apart as someone that lacks self confidence. If you are targeting a company that wants a 35 year old hotshot and you have already left age 50 in the rear view mirror, you probably won’t be hired, even if you are in top physical condition and die your hair. You are not fooling anyone. Redirect your efforts to find companies that value the more seasoned executive. If you are honest on your resume, you will be more confident when you interview, because you won’t be worried about the truth leaking out and you probably won’t see disappointment in the eyes of your interviewer when you first meet them.
- 4. Reverse Chronology:** Keeping in mind item 3 above, the reverse chronology resume is still the best marketing tool. Place greater emphasis on your most recent position and the one preceding it, depending upon your length of tenure.

Positions held five to fifteen years ago should occupy a decreasing amount of narrative. Positions held before fifteen years ago should be limited to company name, position title and dates of employment. This is true for any career, but when you are dealing with new technology, do you want to talk about what you did twenty-five years ago?

- 5. Unusual Fonts, Tables, Boxes and Margin Comments:** Leave them out. Use a standard font such as Arial or Times New Roman with a direct narrative. Many tables, margin notes and fonts become truncated and corrupted when copied to recruiter and corporate data bases. They also confuse a reader and create the impression that you are unable to articulate succinctly your strengths and value to a potential employer.

There are many opinions as to what comprises a good resume. It goes without saying that you must have excellent content when creating your resume. If you already have a resume with excellent content that is well presented, you are on your way. Nevertheless, even with great content, if you ignore these five tips, you may be eliminated from consideration for the job of your dreams.

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Ed Pospesil, the founder and Chairman of TENG, LLC, has thirty years' experience in IT executive search. His firm, Edward J. Pospesil & Company, LLC has helped a variety of enterprises from the Fortune 500 as well as mid-tier and entrepreneurial firms identify and select the best senior IT executives to meet business challenges and objectives. He has performed searches for a variety of manufacturing, service, financial, healthcare, pharmaceutical, academic and professional organizations. One of his key strengths is his ability to quickly identify executives who create significant strategic change and measurable improvement in their organization's total business performance.

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Ed Pospesil
Chairman
Technology Executives Networking Group' LLC
<http://www.theteng.org>
President
Edward J. Pospesil & Company
Information Technology Executive Search
221 Driftwood Lane
Guilford, CT 06437-1922
www.ejp.com
Voice: 203-458-6566
Fax: 203-458-6564

Mobile: 203-640-1580