

APSEA So Chap. Mini-Trng Session December 2012

TOPIC: "Avoid the Top 10 Resume Mistakes "

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It's deceptively easy to make mistakes on your resume and exceptionally difficult to repair the damage once an employer gets it. So prevention is critical, especially if you've never written one before. Here are the most common pitfalls and how you can avoid them.

1. Typos and Grammatical Errors : Your resume needs to be grammatically perfect. If it isn't, employers will read between the lines and draw not-so-flattering conclusions about you, like: "This person can't write," or "This person obviously doesn't care."

2. Lack of Specifics : Employers need to understand what you've done and accomplished. For example:

A) Worked with employees in a restaurant setting.

B) Recruited, hired, trained and supervised more than 20 employees in a restaurant with \$2 million in annual sales. Both of these phrases could describe the same person, but the details and specifics in example B will more likely grab an employer's attention.

3. Attempting One Size Fits All : Whenever you try to develop a one-size-fits-all resume to send to all employers, you almost always end up with something employers will toss in the recycle bin. Employers want you to write a resume specifically for them. They expect you to clearly show how and why you fit the position in a specific organization.

4. Highlighting Duties Instead of Accomplishments : It's easy to slip into a mode where you simply start listing job duties on your resume.

For example:

* Attended group meetings and recorded minutes;

* Worked with children in a day-care setting;

* Updated departmental files.

Employers, however, don't care so much about what you've done as what you've accomplished in your various activities. They're looking for statements more like these:

* Used laptop computer to record weekly meeting minutes and compiled them in a Microsoft Word-based file for future organizational reference.

* Developed three daily activities for preschool-age children and prepared them for a 10-minute holiday program performance.

* Reorganized 10 years worth of unwieldy files, making them easily accessible to department members.

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5. Going on Too Long or Cutting Things Too Short : Despite what you may read or hear, there are no real rules governing the length of your resume. Why? Because human beings, who have different preferences and expectations where resumes are concerned, will be reading it. That doesn't mean your resume should be five-pages. Generally speaking, you usually need to limit yourself to a maximum of two pages. But don't feel you have to use two pages if one will do. Conversely, don't cut the meat out of your resume simply to make it conform to an arbitrary one-page standard.

6. A Bad Objective

Employers read your resume's objective statement, but they often plow through vague pufferies like, "Seeking a challenging position that offers professional growth." Give employers something specific that focuses on their needs as well as your own. Example: "A challenging entry-level marketing position that allows me to contribute my skills and experience in fund-raising for nonprofits."

7. No Action Verbs

Avoid using phrases like "responsible for." Instead, use action verbs: "Resolved user questions as part of an IT help desk serving 4,000 students and staff."

8. Leaving Off Important Information

You may be tempted to eliminate mention of jobs you've taken to earn extra money for school. Typically, the soft skills you've gained from these experiences (e.g., work ethic, time management) are more important to employers than you might think.

9. Visually Too Busy

If your resume is wall-to-wall text featuring five different fonts, it might give the prospective employer a headache. Ask friends to review it for comments before sending it out.

10. Incorrect Contact Information:

Double-check even the most minute, taken-for-granted details -- sooner rather than later. Even if your resume is incredibly strong, you won't get calls if you listed an incorrect telephone or address number.

See you at the next APSEA Mtg where we will continue to discuss these Mini-Trng sessions. Pp