

Knock their socks off

The job market is intensely competitive and having a perfect resume will help you stand out

Pensacola News Journal

February 19, 2011

Pensacola, FL - In the fine art of digital-age resume writing, Mandy Resmondo says what you omit about yourself is often as important as what you include.

A human resources specialist for Landrum Staffing, Resmondo reviews hundreds of resumes every week, and over the years has developed a definitive list of do's and don'ts, and fatal errors.

"Do not include photos, age, race, marital status, why you left your last job, or your previous salary," Resmondo warns. "Leave off travel experiences and hobbies, but consider bringing them up during an interview."

Resmondo will read between 25 and 60 resumes every day and generally can glean the winners from the losers in less than 30 seconds.

"If I spot a misspelling or grammatical error it's fatal, and I usually won't even call back a candidate," she said. "Resumes have to be perfect. Spell Check doesn't always catch misspellings or misused words.

"It's very important to have someone read over your resume before you send it," she added.

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing job seekers is getting their resume to stand out.

Standing out

Every available opening in this intensely competitive jobs market typically draws dozens — if not hundreds — of applications.

"If your resume looks like everyone else's, you will get passed over," Ashley Anderson, a job services specialist at Pensacola State College, said. "The problem I see most is that people are being way too general in their resumes.

"With the job market the way it is, you really have to have something that will speak out to potential employers.

And what are employers looking for that will "speak" to them?

Job stability over a relatively long period of time is key, Resmondo said.

"If someone's had 15 jobs during their work career that not so great," she said.

Skills that work

Employers also are looking for a solid combination of "soft" and "hard" skills that will fit into their organization.

"What we are hearing from employers today are their need for soft skills, that is people with communications skills, critical thinking skills, and project management skills," Lauren Loeffler, director of career services at the University of West Florida, said. "That is what is becoming really important in the job search process."

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Like Resmondo, Loeffler said with more candidates going after the same jobs, the ability to craft a resume that demonstrates good communication skills that will fit into an employer's workplace is critical to success.

Organize

When writing a resume for a particular job, how you organize your resume and work history for a specific job also is important.

Being a generalist these days is not an advantage.

"The trend today is starting off your first statement with what skills you have to offer, not what your objective is," Workforce Escarosa spokesman Tom Ousley said.

Workforce is a state and federally funded nonprofit jobs resource center with offices in Pensacola, Milton and Century.

"Keep in mind that you've got about 30 seconds to impress an employer, so the first sentence should be about the concentration of skills you have to offer for that particular job," he said.

Resmondo and Ousley also note another major trend in resume writing; the "functional" versus the "chronological" resume.

A functional resume is recommended for those job seekers who have been in the work force for a long period of time.

"If someone's been in the work force for 25 years they might want to do a functional resume, which lists accomplishments, management leadership and progressive advancement rather than a chronological list of previous jobs," Resmondo said. "Also, an applicant should mention any work performance awards or recognitions from organizations."

A chronological resume — a list of previous jobs starting with the most recent — is recommended for people generally in the early phases of their work careers.

Need help?

Being out of work and looking for a job can be stressful enough, but composing a viable resume for the first time in years can multiply that stress.

So where can a job seeker get help to compose a fresh, viable resume?

Workforce Escarosa offers weekly classes in teaching job seekers how to operate a computer, coupled with another class on how to create a resume and upload a resume to an employer's website, Ousley said.

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"The classes are free and take about 2½ hours each," he said.

While at Workforce, job seekers also can search area job banks and apply for jobs online.

Ousley also recommends unemployed persons looking for work to spend time online looking at various websites that offer help crafting a resume.

"Two sites I recommend are 'www.onetonline.org' and 'www.onecenter.org,' " Ousley said. "Those sites will help you write a resume and how to focus your search on specific jobs."

Another growing trend in the work force is employers visiting social network sites such as Facebook and Myspace to get a three-dimensional look at their applicants that goes beyond what contained in a traditional, single-page resume.

"We are encouraging people to make sure if they do set up any kind of account on social networks that it's very professional and also lists skills they have to offer," Ousley said.

While a sharply focused, well-written resume is the first step toward success for many, Ousley said job seekers should not ignore another tried-and-true approach.

"We strongly encourage those people looking for a job, no matter what they want to do, to include networking," he said. "That is absolutely essential, especially for professionals."

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