

Five Simple Ways to Tune Up Your Resume

When my friend, Jeff, called I immediately sensed the frustration in his voice. His wife had recently transferred to a new city and he, the trailing spouse, was in the job market for the first time in 15 years.

"I've sent out more than 75 resumes," he wailed, "and I haven't got a single interview!"

"You have to be patient," I said, trying to be encouraging. "On average, only one interview is granted for every 245 resumes."

"But I'm better than average!" he insisted. And he clearly was.

Jeff had been a successful department head with impressive credentials. He was confident and charismatic. His personality would fill up the room. I asked him to send me his resume.

But when I read it, the Jeff I knew and respected was nowhere to be found. His resume was flat, ordinary and -- unlike Jeff -- didn't stand out from the crowd. That spells trouble when you're competing with 245 others for someone's time and attention. It's no wonder that employers spend only 10 to 20 seconds reading (i.e. skimming) a typical resume.

Fortunately, Jeff's resume didn't need a major overhaul. Thanks to a minor "tune up," he's had five interviews and is weighing two offers (both higher than his previous salary).

Listed below are a few, simple tips to get the highest possible performance out of your resume.

1. Avoid pet peeves that turn off readers.

A survey of more than 2,500 recruiters and headhunters by ResumeDoctor.com found these top five "pet peeves" with resumes:

- Spelling errors, typos and poor grammar
- Too duty oriented (fails to list accomplishments)
- Missing dates or inaccurate dates
- Missing contact info, inaccurate or unprofessional email addresses
- Poor formatting

2. Focus on what matters most.

According to Brian Drum, a leading authority on executive recruiting, prospective employers are most interested in:

- Recent job titles
- Companies you worked for
- Chronology of work experience
- Level of education

3. Customize for the job you're seeking.

Customize your resume to address a specific job opening and its requirements. A survey by CareerBuilder.com found that 71 percent of hiring managers preferred this approach when considering resumes.

4. Make your resume easy to read (and scan).

Readers are more likely to discard a resume that uses paragraphs compared to bullet points and indents. Try the "ten second test." Give your resume to friends and give them only 10 seconds to review it. Did the key points you want emphasized come through?

5. Use action-oriented verbs.

Circle every verb on your resume. How many of them are passive? Replace each with active, powerful words that suggest you are a person who takes charge and gets results. For example, consider replacing "was responsible for" with "led" or "accomplished" or "achieved."

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Joel Garfinkle provides outplacement services to displaced workers. His proven and structured 9-step program helps you find a new job quickly. Joel has over 15 years of first-hand expertise in the job search and career transition field. Visit Joel online at [Garfinkle Outplacement Services](#).

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