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Five Common Mistakes to Avoid in Your Resume

The Killer Resume.com

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1. Meaningless Acronyms

If you are going to use acronyms within your resume, be sure that you only use common ones that everyone is aware of.

For example, it is safe to assume that all employers will recognize VP as the short form of Vice "President". However, not everyone will know SVP stands for "Senior Vice President", RM stands for "Regional Manager", and CCS stands for "Customer Care Specialist". It's best not to take chances -- when in doubt, just write out the full title of your position.

2. Using Superlatives

Never, never, never use superlatives in your resume. Regardless of how outstanding your performance at a job was, don't say you were the "Best Support Engineer" or a "Great Manager". Instead, illustrate your competency by facts and back up your claims by awards or numbers.

For example, say things like:

Consultant of the Year, 1999.

Exceeded Sales Quota by 50% in Q1 2001.

Promoted to Senior Developer within 6 months.

It is perfectly fine to promote yourself in your resume -- just make sure you do so with facts and figures, not claims and appraisals.

3. Repetitiveness

The quickest and surest way to bore your resume reader to death is by using and re-using the same subset of verbs. For example, if you list 5 jobs in your Professional Experience section, make sure that they don't all begin with "Responsible for ...". On the same note, they shouldn't all begin with "Designed and Developed..." either! As simple as this advice sounds, many resumes tend to stick with a handful of overused verbs. Be creative, but...

4. Don't Be Too Creative

There is no need to go overboard. Using words like "ameliorated" and "edification" in your resume is overkill. Simplicity and conciseness are keys to building powerful resumes. By using too many big words you risk coming across as supercilious, patronizing, and flippant (kind of like this sentence). No employer will want to pull out a dictionary just to find out what you did at your last job.

5. Long Sentences

Avoid long sentences at all costs. Employers tend to glance at and skim resumes, rather than read them from top to bottom. To make things stand out, therefore, you should use short sentences and bulleted lists to itemize key accomplishments and facts.

For example, instead of saying:

I joined the Dallas, TX start-up as a software developer, working as part of a large team on the development of an interactive, web-based billing system and writing code in both Perl and C++.

Write:

Key Accomplishments:

- Implemented an interactive, web-based billing system.
- Developed code in Perl & C++.
- Collaborated with a 12-member software team.

Which one of the above layouts do you think an employer who is skimming through your resume will notice?

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