



The 10 Most Common Mistakes Technical Professionals Make When Looking for Work

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Overview

- **About the Speaker**
- **Ground Rules**
- **The 10 Most Common Mistakes**
- **Questions and Answers**
- **LavaCon Drawing**

About the Speaker

- Formerly a Manager in a Software Company
- Currently the President of ProSpring Technical Staffing
- Executive Director, The LavaCon Conference on Technical Communication and Project Management

Ground Rules

- Group Participation
- Disclaimer: Anything I say is just my opinion—it's not true unless you try it and see if it's true for *you*.
- I'll present opposing points of view on certain topics and let you decide.
- Speaking in Hypertext
- Chinese Artists

Overview

- **HR vs. Agency Recruiters**
- **Recruiters receive 10's if not 100's of resumes a day**
- **If you want them to help you find a job, help them do their jobs**
- **Presented in order of chronology, not severity**

1. Not Following Submission Directions

- **Read the directions**
- **First Impressions Last**
- **Email, Fax or Snail Mail?**
- **Formatted or ASCII Resume?**

2. Not Building Personal Relationships

- **Develop a personal relationship with your recruiter.**
- **You want someone who will sing your praises to the next person in the hiring process.**
- **...especially if you are not an exact match or have some other special situation.**
- **Plus, when a cool job comes in, who do you think they will call first?**

3. Bad Manners

- **It's poor form to mail your resume to 45 recruiters in one email...**
- **...especially when you display them all in the To: field!**
- **Keep a log of where your resume has been sent.**
- **Don't insult the recruiter. (I'm not kidding—it happens!)**

4. Applying When You Are not Even Remotely Qualified

- Don't apply without considering the requirements.
- Do apply for jobs that are a bit of a stretch, but at least be in the ballpark!
- Don't do "shotgun" applications.
- Pay attention to the "must have" vs. "nice to have" requirements.

5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements

- Not all recruiters have the time to read your resume from top to bottom—some just skim for keywords and needed skills.
- Do you really want them to decide if you are a good enough match to pass on?

5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements (cont.)

- **Be pro-active: send a matrix of the job requirements vs. your skills so they don't have to do it for you.**
- **If you don't have one of the needed skills, this is where you say, "I don't have XYZ, but I do have ABC, which is very similar."**

5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements (cont.)

- **Suddenly, recruiters love you:**
 - **They didn't have to search for the information.**
 - **You typed the summary for them.**
 - **You pointed out important information they may have missed.**
 - **All they had to do is verify the information and pass it on.**

6. Misnaming Your Resume

- Remember, recruiters get 10's if not 100's of electronic resumes a day.
- Would you want to receive 100 resumes a day named "resume.doc"?
- Name your resume so it can be found easily: for example, "Joe Jones.doc"
- P.S. About your email address...

7. Poor Resumes

- Your resume is the first sample of your writing skill.
- Programmers can get away with bad writing and formatting, but technical writers cannot!
- Hiring managers judge candidates based on their resumes...
- ...and will disqualify you if have sloppy mistakes in your resume.

8. Mis-evaluation of Importances

- **Highlight your strengths.**
- **Minimize your weaknesses.**
- **For example, put the most applicable information, experience or skills near the top of your resume.**
- **Put less- or non-applicable experience near the bottom.**

9. Not Anticipating Questions

- **Recruiters wonder about oddities in resumes, so be pro-active and explain them.**
- **Examples:**
 - Gaps in Your Work History
 - Your Citizenship or Work Visa Status
 - Moving from Contract to Perm
 - Moving from Perm to Contract (to a lesser degree)
 - Need Relocation Assistance if Out-of-state?

10. Not Keeping Your Skills Current

- **Not Knowing Your Tools**
- **If you can really just pick them up in a week, how come you haven't already done so?**
- **Between professional organization, continuing education and conferences, there are plenty of ways to stay current.**

Summary

- **Follow submission directions.**
- **Build personal relationships.**
- **Use good manners and Netiquette.**
- **Apply for jobs for which you are qualified.**
- **Include a summary of how your skills match the job requirements when you submit your resume.**
- **Name your electronic resume so it can be identified.**
- **Proofread your resume.**
- **Highlight your strengths, minimize your weaknesses.**
- **Anticipate and answer questions.**
- **Keep your skills current.**



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