

The Biggest Resume Mistake You Can Make

by Caroline Potter, Yahoo! HotJobs

Your resume is the most important document in any job search. But what if you're submitting resume after resume and receiving no results at all -- not even a call? Your [resume](#) may be fatally flawed.

How can a resume betray a job seeker? It's not just typos or poor formatting. According to Lauren Milligan, founder of ResuMAYDAY, a resume-writing and career coaching firm based near Chicago, "The biggest flaw for a resume is when it fails to showcase a person's accomplishments, contributions, and results, and instead spouts a job description of each position he's held."

Use these three tips to make sure your resume doesn't betray you.

1. Think Big

Whatever jobs you've held -- be it as an assistant or a CEO -- think beyond the everyday tasks of your position. Shares Milligan, "People get bogged down in the day-to-day details of their jobs, but when it comes to your resume, you've got to get out of the clutter and ask yourself, 'What does this work mean?'"

She continues, "If I'm hiring for an administrative assistant, I already know what one does. I don't want to see a resume that only says an applicant can type and answer a phone. You have to go beyond that to point out your specific strengths."

Start by having big-picture conversations about what you do and how it serves the organization as a whole. States Milligan, "If you're in a support position, consider how successful the person you support is and how you help her do her job better. What role do you have in her successes? Those are your accomplishments."

2. Be Clear

Focusing on your accomplishments rather than your specific responsibilities will help keep your [resume](#) concise. "There's a huge difference between a resume and the Great American Novel," says Milligan. "The resumes I'm most proud of summed up a 25-year career in a single page."

She urges job seekers to remember that resumes are typically skimmed for a mere six to eight seconds. "Make sure you're identifying the companies you worked for, how long you were there, and if you earned a promotion. Those are things that people look for immediately." Also, if your job title is long and vague, tighten it up so that people immediately understand what you've done. For example, "Marketing Manager" is much more accessible than "Global Identity Architect."

Given the time you have to catch a recruiter's eye, a focused, accomplishment-driven resume is the way to go. She adds, "If you are loaded up on peripheral stuff, it's too hard for a hiring manager to find your story."

3. Get Real

What if you're trying to think about how you've helped build the big picture for your employer and you come up blank?

"A couple of times I've talked to people who insisted they just did their jobs and there's nothing special about them that jumps out," Milligan observes. "I've asked these folks point-blank, 'Are you really in the right position then?'" It's a difficult question to ask, according to this resume expert, but, she says, "These people may be chasing the wrong job."

She counsels clients that if they cannot speak about what they've done in terms of enhancing the position or the company, "You may be just punching a clock -- and you and your employer deserve more."

Look for other opportunities in which you can contribute and grow professionally and you'll enjoy a more rewarding career. And you'll have a more successful [resume](#).