

CareerBuilder.com Survey Reveals Top Three Fatal Resume and Cover Letter Mistakes ... and How to Fix Them

Hiring Managers Nationwide Tell All on How to Get in the Front Door

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More than 650 hiring managers nationwide gave insights on what influences them to pick or pass on a resume and cover letter in a recent CareerBuilder.com survey. Plagiarizing a job posting, spamming multiple employers with the same message and failing to spell-check are three of the most surefire ways to get a rejection letter, according to hiring managers. At the same time, resumes and cover letters that are concise, show excitement about the position and focus on how the candidate can specifically contribute to the company's success tend to be placed in the "Yes" pile. The survey, "How to Get in the Front Door," was conducted from May 17 to May 27, 2005.

Forty-four percent of hiring managers say they will automatically dismiss a resume or cover letter that appears to duplicate the job posting. Nobody likes to see their work plagiarized, including human resource professionals and hiring managers who authored a job posting. Copycats who cut and paste portions of the job posting into their resumes and cover letters bring their professionalism, honesty and originality into question.

-- Tip: Pepper in keywords from the job posting as they apply to your skills and experience and write in your own voice. Also, to maximize your visibility, keep in mind other keywords hiring managers most often use when searching through resumes. The most popular keywords identified by participants in this survey include:

- Problem-solving and decision-making
- Performance and productivity improvement
- Oral and written communications
- Team-building
- Leadership
- Project management
- Customer retention
- Internet
- Strategic planning

Forty-eight percent of hiring managers say they will automatically dismiss a resume or cover letter that is not customized. Hiring managers can smell a mass mailing a mile away, especially when the resume includes irrelevant past jobs and the cover letter begins with "Dear Human Resources Department." Sending a generic resume and cover letter to 200 companies screams, "I'm lazy!"

-- Tip: First, narrow your employer targets to those that are the best match for your skill set. Take the time to research each company and find out the name of the hiring manager. A company's Web site can give you great insights into company positioning, work culture and new developments that you can work into your messaging.

Forty-nine percent of hiring managers say they will automatically dismiss a resume or cover letter with spelling or grammatical errors. From the would-be administrative assistant who claimed to be a "rabid typist" to the executive who boasted that he was "instrumental in ruining the entire operation," misspellings communicate that you have poor writing skills or a lackadaisical attitude or just are not all that bright.

-- Tip: Don't rely solely on your electronic spell-check. Ask at least three other people to review your resume or cover letter. Eight eyes are better than two.

"Your resume and its partner, the cover letter, can either be your ticket to an interview or to a recycling bin," said Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of Human Resources for CareerBuilder.com. "Thirty-one percent of hiring managers report they have seen an increase in the number of applications they've received over the last six months. If you want to be considered for a position, it's important to convey that you are original, well-informed about the company and a stickler for details."

For more information on CareerBuilder.com surveys, visit <http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/AboutUs/PR/surveys.htm>.

*comScore Media Metrix, March 2005. The CareerBuilder Network is a custom aggregation of CareerBuilder.com traffic as well as job search traffic to career centers CareerBuilder powers for partner sites such as Tribune Company, Gannett, Knight Ridder and others.

Survey Methodology

The new CareerBuilder.com survey, "How to Get in the Front Door," was conducted from May 17 to May 27, 2005. Methodology used to collect survey responses totaling more than 650 hiring managers for this study involved selecting a random sample of comScore Networks panel members. These Web Panel members were approached via an e-mail invitation, which asked them to participate in a short online survey. The results of this survey are statistically accurate to within +/- 3.84 percentage points (19 times out of 20).

About CareerBuilder.com

CareerBuilder.com is the nation's largest online job site with more than 20 million unique visitors and over 1 million jobs. Owned by Gannett Co., Inc., Tribune Company, and Knight Ridder, Inc., the company offers a vast online and print network to help job seekers connect with employers. CareerBuilder.com powers the career centers for more than 550 partners that reach national, local, industry and niche audiences. These include more than 165 newspapers and leading portals such as America Online and MSN. More than 30,000 of the nation's top employers take advantage of CareerBuilder.com's easy job postings, 11 million-plus resumes, Diversity Channel and more. Millions of job seekers visit the site every month to search for opportunities by industry, location, company and job type, sign up for automatic email job alerts, and get advice on job hunting and career management. For more information about CareerBuilder.com products and services, visit <http://www.careerbuilder.com/>.

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