21st Century CV
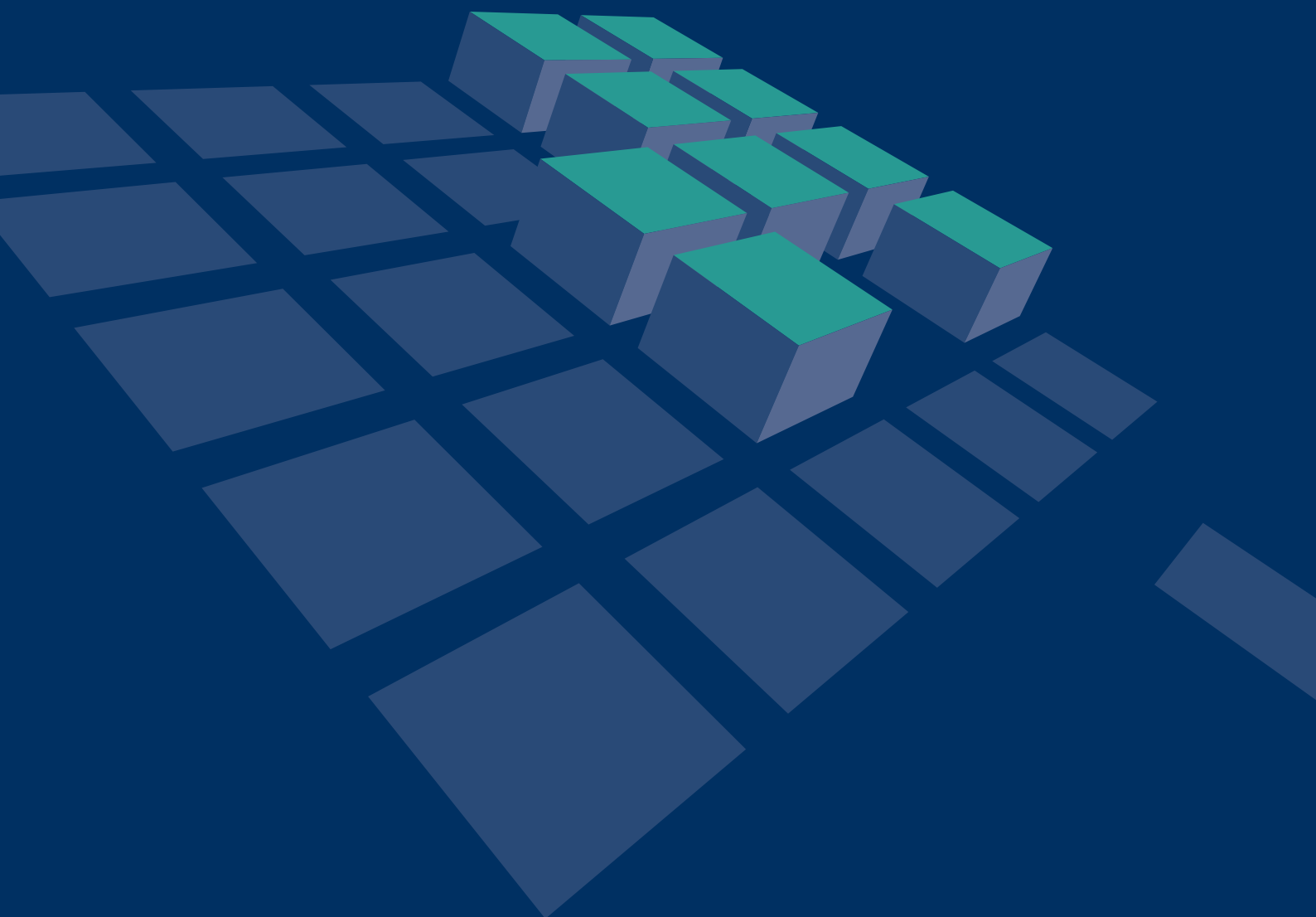## The resume in the digital age

ODGERS BERNDTSON

Our Commitment to Candidates

We invest in building non-transactional partnerships with our candidates outside the search process. Our focus on a constructive candidate experience means that you can trust our advice throughout your executive career.

Candidates

Colleagues   Clients

Introduction

Today the general idea of the resume remains the same as in the past: it is an introduction sent by a job seeker to a potential employer that provides a summary of the candidate's capabilities, history, and suitability for employment. But the resume of the 21st century is a more structured document, and the weight that employers give to it is significant. Your resume—whether it is uploaded on LinkedIn or not—is frequently the first detailed information an executive recruiter or potential employer will receive about you and the basis of their initial impression.

The most frequently asked question about a resume is: How do I make sure it gets read? As retained executive recruiters, we see thousands of high-level resumes each year in our search for exceptional people. These resumes vary in length, format, and readability, and have informed the suggestions set forth in this booklet. We hope you'll find them useful.

In 1482, Leonardo da Vinci wrote a letter to the regent of Milan introducing himself as an artificer of war technologies and describing the weapons that—if hired—he would build: "I have kinds of mortars," Leonardo wrote, "most convenient and easy to carry; and with these I can fling small stones almost resembling a storm."

Not only did da Vinci's letter get him the job and a longtime patron—12 years later, the regent, then Duke of Milan, commissioned *The Last Supper*—it also gets him credit for writing what some consider the world's first resume.

Writing Your Resume

1. FONTS & FORMATTING

The people reading your resume are scanning it for key elements. In the early stages of a search, HR and executive search professionals spend only a few seconds per resume. Essentially, they glance at job titles, company names, dates, and education. If they don't easily find these things or are distracted by atypical elements, the resume winds up at the bottom of the pile.

With that in mind, our general guidelines are:

KEEP IT SIMPLE
Flamboyant formatting, prose, or fonts often come off as more ostentatious than clever. A traditionally formatted resume remains more likely—in our field—to secure an interview than a video posted on YouTube.

KEEP IT CLEAR
Use single-spaced, 12-point font. The font should be simple and easy to read. We recommend that executives use Times New Roman or Cambria. But applicants in the first years of their career should use a sans-serif font—Calibri or Lucida Sans—because many applicant tracking systems (ATS)* cannot read serif fonts and will automatically discard resumes in Times New Roman and Cambria. Whatever font you use, make sure it is consistent throughout.

USE WORD
When emailing or uploading your resume, it is best to use a Word document because recruiters often parse resumes into their own formats and because ATS software can't scan PDFs, which could mean automatic rejection.

ROUND THE EDGES
Make sure your bullet points are round, not triangular or square. Some ATS software gets hung up on complex symbols.

DO NOT INCLUDE A PICTURE
Many employers will disregard resumes with pictures.

DON'T BE FLASHY
Be minimal with typographical emphasis, i.e. bold, italic, underline, and full-word capitalization. With our recommended formatting, recruiters can quickly find each company you've worked for not just because companies are in bold, but because nothing else is.

EDIT EVERYTHING
Throw out all unnecessary words and avoid typographical errors.

*For more about applicant tracking systems see page 22.

Did you know?

Only **25%** of resumes submitted online today get viewed by human eyes.

Nearly **50%** of recruiters will disregard resumes that contain non-standard fonts, margins, or colors.

SUSAN FLETCHER

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2. THE HEADING

The heading should appear at the top of every page and include the following: your name, address, and contact information. Each page after the first should begin with an abridged heading that includes your name, email address, and page number. We recommend providing only one phone number and one email.

There are several acceptable methods for formatting a resume heading, but we prefer the example on the facing page. Things to consider:

BE CURRENT
Increasingly, it's a good idea to have a Gmail or a personal email provider. Fairly or not, Hotmail and AOL have behind-the-times associations.

BE YOURSELF
Make sure your email address is recognizably yours. Susan Fletcher should not have "S_67_F@candidate.com" as her email address.

BE CONNECTED
Depending on your industry, you may also provide links to your LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, or website URL.

Did you know?

59% of recruiters will reject resumes on the basis of spelling or grammar errors.

Located at the top of your resume, the executive profile is an opportunity for you to summarize your current career standing and relevant skills. This section has a number of acceptable names, including Career Profile, Resume Profile, Key Competencies, and Expertise.

A typical executive profile has two parts: a short sentence or paragraph followed by a list of core skills. (You can see an abridged example below.)

The executive profile should provide an at-a-glance view of your current professional expertise with an emphasis on areas in which you excel or have deep experience.

When customizing or updating your executive profile for specific job opportunities, remember to:

HIGHLIGHT SKILLS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE ROLE
For example, if you are interested in a senior level sales position, write "Accomplished sales professional with 15+ years' experience in sales management."

MAKE SURE YOU'RE CONSISTENT
The content of your executive profile should match what appears on your resume and the information available about you on the internet. This includes LinkedIn, magazine profiles, and short bios that appear when you are a speaker or panelist at an event.

EXECUTIVE PROFILE OR OBJECTIVE STATEMENT?
An objective statement resembles the executive profile in a number of ways; it's a brief introduction located at the top of your resume. But instead of describing your current capabilities and key skills, the objective statement describes what you're looking for in your next job. Though advocates of the objective statement consider it an opportunity for the applicant to articulate some clear-eyed career goals, it has gone out of fashion lately because it limits the way people read your interests and capabilities. In fact, many recruiters will not read either an executive summary or an objective statement, making it all the more important to create a strong description of your professional experience (see Section 3 on page 8).

As recruiters, we recommend allowing professionals to determine your suitability for a position based on the career experience you describe to them.

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Experienced marketing executive with major communications, account sales strategy, business development, and civic partnership expertise.

Core Skills:

- Development of strategic, business development, branding, and marketing plans

- Adept project manager able to handle complex information

- Process oriented with ability to prioritize and streamline tasks

- Proven ability to establish trusted relationships with colleagues at all levels of the organization

3. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

This section, which can alternately be called executive experience, is the bulk of your resume.

FORMATTING
As we've emphasized above, it's imperative that your resume be rich in information but can be quickly scanned. (We recommend the format shown in the example below.)

- This is the second page of Susan's resume. So she includes an abridged heading, complete with page number.

- Note the minimalist look: Simply bold the company and italicize the company description. Everything else is plain text.

- The sentences in the responsibilities section and key accomplishments section should begin with verbs, not personal pronouns.

- List the positions you've held in reverse chronological order, newest to oldest.

- For your current position, use the present tense to describe responsibilities. Use the past tense for all former positions.

- For each position, state your title and responsibilities, including the number of employees you supervised and your sales numbers or budget.

- The employment dates should be divided by an en dash (–), not a hyphen (-) or an em dash (—).

COMPANY DESCRIPTION
We recommend including this because it allows readers to understand your career without pre-existing familiarity of the companies you've worked for. You may be a Chief Financial Officer, but we want to know whether you were working for a retailer with $300 million in sales or a $6 billion global manufacturer of automotive products.

SUSAN FLETCHER   Page 2
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Company, location   Started–Present
Job Title

Brief company description (no more than two sentences). Responsibilities: 2-4 sentences in paragraph form. Do not use pronouns. Do not state the obvious. Mention aspects of the job that were not obviously implied by the job title.

Key Accomplishments
- Achieved record sales goals of $25 million in 2016
- Grew revenues more than 20% in first three quarters of 2017

> **When you tell us that you are 'talented' or have 'strong interpersonal skills,' it comes across as self-congratulatory while telling us very little**

RESPONSIBILITIES

This section is what it sounds like: a brief summation of the tasks associated with your position, especially those that can't be directly inferred from your job title. To save space, we recommend putting responsibilities in paragraph form, as in the career profile section.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This is where you get specific about your successes.

Whenever possible, quantify these achievements. Instead of writing, "Grew the business," write, "Grew the company from its inception to the market leader with $890 million in annual sales."

Avoid subjective self-assessment. When you tell us that you are "talented" or have "strong interpersonal skills," it comes across as self-congratulatory while telling us very little. Instead, be specific: if you have "received six medical device patents," we know you're talented; if you were "awarded the Chairman's Award in 2016," we know you're good with people.

> **66** Always write your own resume; no one knows more about you than you **99**

LENGTH

Your resume should be as long as necessary to concisely summarize your career. A candidate with a seven-figure salary and 25+ years of work experience will have a longer resume than a five-figure employee who's still early in his or her career. Many senior-level executive resumes run to four or five pages.

That said, you should state the facts concisely and without embellishment. Always write your own resume; no one knows more about you than you. State all of your previous and current roles. A good recruiter will spend two to three hours interviewing you for their client, and if your resume is well prepared, it will increase the depth and efficiency of these conversations.

Do not leave things out, and do not leave interpretations up for grabs. If you leave a job out of your resume because it doesn't seem relevant to your current career, a recruiter might simply assume you weren't working during that time period. If you leave out your first ten years in the industry for the same reasons, people might wonder if you're trying to hide your age.

The more jobs you list, the more potential affinity groups you enter into. What do we mean by affinity groups? Let's say you're an insurance executive; you've had a sterling 35-year career and you're looking for your next board appointment. It might not seem relevant to include your first job on your resume's last page: an analyst position in the London office of Big Resume (BR) Bank. After all, you're an insurance executive; you left BR after just two years, convinced that banking wasn't your thing. But what if the person reading your resume—maybe the chairperson of a board in need of a new director—also did his or her analyst years at BR's London branch? Suddenly, the chairperson sees you as someone with whom she's shared an experience, a place, a context, maybe even some friends. You belong to the same affinity group. And people who belong to the same groups tend to advocate for each other, even subliminally. (This is a big part of what social psychologists call social identity theory.)
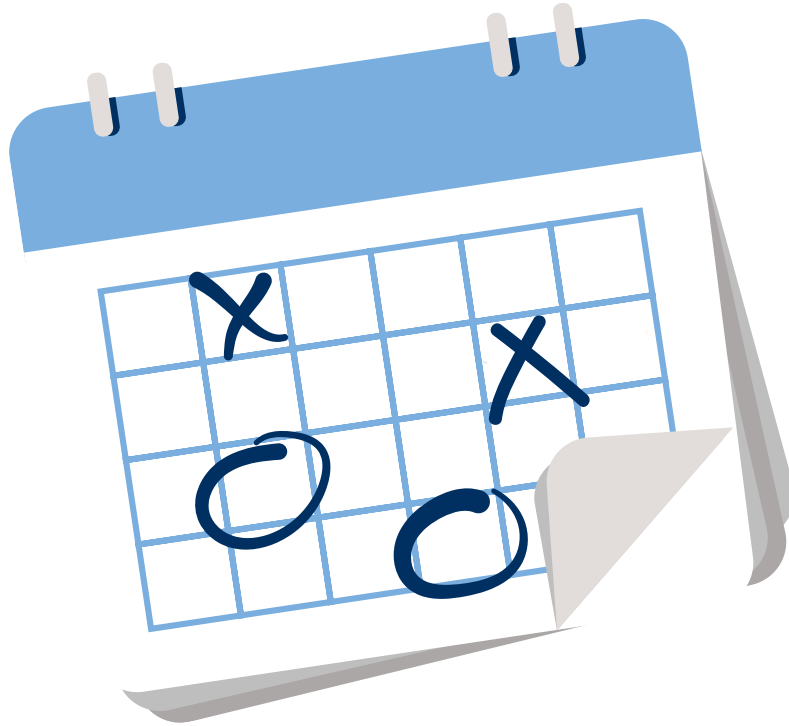
SHORT TENURE

How do you talk about jobs held for brief periods? Take a look at the example on the facing page. Susan Fletcher does several things right here:

- This is the second page of her resume. So she includes an abridged heading, complete with page number.

- Because she was employed for less than a year, she listed months. If she had simply written 2010 – 2011, it would have implied two years of employment, which was not the case. By stating the facts, Susan avoids incurring a recruiter's distrust.

- Susan gives a reason for her departure from GoodSeed. By doing so she (a) minimizes the negative implications of short tenure, and (b) lets the recruiter better understand the facts.

- Susan does not provide key accomplishments. Why not? She wasn't at GoodSeed long enough to accomplish anything that compares favorably to her previous and future accomplishments. This is an important lesson: rather than inventing an accomplishment, leave it blank.

Did you know?

Referrals account for at least

30% of external hires. Work those affinity groups!

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

GoodSeed Bread Co.,
Sacramento, CA   November 2017–May 2018
Director of Marketing

The GoodSeed Bread Company, before being acquired by Peace Foods in March 2018, was the world's largest organic-only bread product distributor with 200 employees and clients in 10 states.

Responsible for all branding, marketing, communications, and business development programs. Departed when the company was restructured after acquisition.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Talent Acquisition Inc., New York, NY   **2014 – Present**

Talent Acquisition Inc. is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing executive search and organizational leadership firms with more than 250 partners and offices in 53 cities across 28 countries.

Partner, Head of Financial Services Practice   2016 – Present

Lead a team of 12 professionals around the world who recruit C-suite executives to global financial services firms

Key Accomplishments:

• Helped recruit five new board members to five global financial services firms

• Worked with Global Vice-Chair to add four search professionals with distinctive financial services backgrounds to the firm

• Co-authored a white paper on blockchain technology that was published by the *Journal of Corporate Finance*

Partner, Head of Asset Management Practice   2014 – 2016

Responsible for a team of search professionals recruiting top talent to asset management firms

Key Accomplishments:

• Helped recruit 10 women into key wealth and asset management positions

• Served on the board of 100 Women in Finance

• Added four new research professionals to the global asset management team

Hands@Work, New York, NY   **2009 – 2014**

Hands@Work was a global internet recruiting firm. It was acquired and taken private by Stark Partners, a private equity firm, in 2014.

Partner   2012 – 2014

Principal   2009 – 2012

Key Accomplishments:

• Organized and led two new divisions within Hands@Work, partnering with LinkedIn to develop brand awareness of the new divisions

> **❝ If you're currently holding your second or more position in the same company, it's probably a good idea to talk about each position ❞**

MULTIPLE POSITIONS IN THE SAME COMPANY

We think there are two good ways of visually presenting this information; which one you choose largely depends on whether you want to talk about each role individually or your tenure at the company collectively—and this probably depends on how recently you held these roles. If you're currently holding your second or more position in the same company, it's probably a good idea to talk about each position. After all, they represent your last few years of work experiences and promotions. In this case, you can present this information as shown (see Talent Acquisition Inc. example).

If you held the positions several decades ago, however, it might be easier to put the titles one after the other and then summarize your entire tenure (see Hands@Work example).

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EDUCATION

Institution, location   Year of degree
Degree

Major
Minor
GPA (if good)
Awards, honors, club memberships, sports teams

Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA   2019 (Expected)
Bachelor of Science

• Biomedical Science Major

Vanderbilt University   Attended 2015 - 2017
• Chemistry Major

4. EDUCATION

Your education section should be formatted just like your professional experience section, again in reverse chronological order, but without a company description. See the example above.

The closer your school years are to the present, the more relevant the information about them. The insurance executive with 35 years of industry experience doesn't need to say that she got a 3.94 GPA (though it can't hurt, so we'd recommend including it), but someone ten years out of college definitely should. It is sometimes even worth including test scores (GRE, SAT) if they are good enough. Remember: recruiters are looking for patterns of excellence—and they will look at in all aspects of your career. So, in general, the more points of excellence you can represent on your resume, the better.

If you did not graduate, or have not yet graduated, format your education section like the example above.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This final section of a resume should include your awards and recognitions, board seats, professional memberships and certifications, volunteer activities, publication history, and language fluencies. In general, we don't advise listing hobbies. It's not particularly useful for an employer to know that you are an avid runner. But if you've completed several competitive marathons, we'd recommend saying so. Why? First, it demonstrates a commitment to meeting personal objectives, which can translate into meeting professional ones. Secondly, running is an affinity group: if the CEO of the company at which you are interviewing is also a marathon runner, you may begin the interview talking about your various races—even before talking about your qualifications for the position in question.

It is also worth noting that in some cases it may be helpful to divide the additional information section into multiple parts, or change its name. A journalist, for example, might entitle their additional information section Publications. A seasoned consulting executive who has sat on multiple boards might have a section devoted to board memberships, another to associations, and another to publications, as shown here. Do whatever best reflects your career history.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

• Member, MIT Enterprise Forum	Current
• Member, Customer Insights Center	Current
• Board Director, Odyssey House	2012 – 2018
• Published: "Men, Women, and Leadership" (*OB Journal*)	2018
• Director, Stanford Alumni Council	2014

BOARD

• Director, Girl Scouts	Current
• Director, Stanford Alumni Council	2012 - 2018

MEMBERSHIPS

• Member, Financial Women's Association	Current
• Member, 100 Women in Finance	Current
• Member, New York Flyers (Running Team)	Current

PUBLICATIONS

• "Corporate Finance in the Digital Age" *(Corporate Finance Journal)*	2019
• "Big Data's Potential to Transform the Finance Function" (*CFO Magazine*)	2018
• "How AI is used in Finance Today" (*Artificial Intelligence Review*, No.16)	2018

HOW TO REFLECT DIVERSITY

Companies are actively seeking diversity at all levels. If you are a minority or self-identify with different groups, it's not a bad idea to reflect this on your resume. We think the best way to incorporate these facts is in your resume's additional information or education sections. Were you a member of a special interest collegiate group? Mention it in your education section. Are you a member of the Asian American Woman's Leadership Institute? Put this in your additional information section. Did you publish an essay about your experiences as a minority college student? Be sure to describe it along with other publications.

6. WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE ON YOUR RESUME

REFERENCES
Do not provide references, unless they're specifically asked for. Do not include any version of "References Available on Request." Employers assume that you can produce references. It's a waste of space and reader attention.

PERSONAL INFORMATION
Do not include marital status, age, weight, health conditions, or a photograph. This sort of information was once expected; now it's considered too much information.

SALARY
Do not include a salary unless specifically asked to do so.

TELL THE TRUTH
A 2017 study found that 85% of employers had caught applicants fibbing on their resumes, versus 65% in 2012. Competition is fierce. The average corporate job post gets more than 250 responses and the widespread adoption of applicant tracking systems has pressured less competitive job seekers to stretch the truth to fit algorithms. Almost all recruiters today run background checks, search for backdoor references, study your internet presence, and use behavioral interviewing techniques to make sure that what you've said about yourself is true. Most will drop a candidate from consideration if they discover that they have lied about their background.

Percentage of candidates caught lying on resumes

	2012	2017
	65%	**85%**
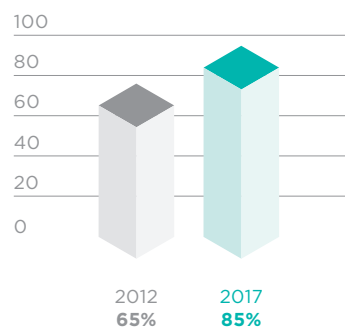
Beyond the Resume

1. BE IN CHARGE OF YOUR INTERNET EXISTENCE

It used to be that your resume and references were the best way for employers to get to know you. In today's digital world, recruiters will study your LinkedIn profile, Instagram, public Facebook pictures, blog posts, and newspaper articles. Your resume and your online image should be consistent. Discrepancies will lead to awkward questions.

LINKEDIN
Corporate HR and executive search professionals use LinkedIn all the time. If you're on LinkedIn, you're much more likely to be contacted. LinkedIn connections can also function as references and affinity group identifiers.

TWITTER
Be careful what you tweet. With one tweet, you can lose your job and/or opportunity.

2. JUST STARTING OUT

Did you know?

70% of employers have rejected potential employees based on negative information they found online.

If you're not an executive yet, your resume will be subject to a different set of standards than it will be later in your career. For mid- and low-level candidates (or even senior applicants in technical fields), the resume has to do a lot of work. Consider this run through of a typical low-level corporate job search: If 1,000 people see an online job post, 200 people are expected to begin the application process and 100 to actually apply. Of these 100 applicants, 75 are dismissed by applicant tracking systems.

Someone in HR then consults the remaining 25 resumes and selects four to eight as long-list candidates, who are brought in for an interview. One to four finalists are then brought in for a second interview. One of them gets the job.

Look at what the resume has to do: first, it has to crack the ATS keyword criteria. Then it has to weather the more subjective, varied, and hard-to-define human measures. More than 90% of the applicants are dismissed on the basis of their resume alone.

WHAT IS AN APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEM? (AND TIPS FOR SURVIVING THEM)

With the average corporate job listing attracting 250 applicants (many draw thousands), companies have become increasingly reliant on ATS software, which runs keyword searches to automatically separate weak resumes from strong ones. The problem is that this added efficiency comes at a cost: 75% of ATS-sifted resumes are never read by a person, and many qualified applicants are automatically dismissed from consideration because their resume's language or formatting did not match the software's keywords or capabilities. One way to circumvent this is by subtly customizing your resume for each application. Your goal here should be to translate your experience and qualifications into the kinds of language used in the job posting. For instance, if you work in additive manufacturing (AM) and are responding to a job posting that asks candidates to have, among other things, "significant AM exposure," it might be tactically wise to make sure that kind of wording appears in your resume. Another thing to consider is formatting. ATS software has trouble with elaborate visual elements (for instance, triangular bullet points), and many simply cannot read PDFs or even common serif typefaces like Times New Roman and Cambria. See our layout section on page 5 for more information about ATS-friendly formatting.

ENDNOTES

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