



Jengyee's inside
peek at résumé screening

What Were They Thinking?

I recently had the displeasure of processing nearly 70 résumés and interest cards for prospective internship candidates. The displeasure came from poorly presented information, including illegible printing. Trying to decipher what someone has written—whether due to poor handwriting or poor composition and formatting—is a waste of time and raises my blood pressure. So, for some tips on what to avoid, I offer my experiences as follows:

Under the heading where contact information is presented...

(1) One person listed two email addresses on his résumé. This is unnecessary and confusing.

(2) If you have an unfamiliar name (like Jengyee) or a particularly long first or last name, I encourage you to abbreviate it in your email address. Do NOT register an email like *jengyee_jiang@email.com*. Instead, use something like *jliang9@email.com* or *jlia9@email.com*. This will minimize the typos to your email when messages go out to you. Avoid creating case-sensitive addresses.

(3) Get a professional email address. I know you've grown fond of *PartyDogX@state.edu* or *happygirl9@campus.edu*, but they don't fit with your new professional identity. As suggested above, get a free email account just for the job search, if you're not parting with your previous address.

In the Objective line...

If you choose to include an objective, please make sure it states something meaningful. I read several that had something to the effect of "to work for a respected company with opportunities for advancement." Which company would not claim this to be true? This tells me NOTHING about your interests. It may imply that you are ambitious and want to advance in a company, but that does not matter until you can prove yourself. Advancement will come; saying you're interested is not enough.

Instead, try an objective that describes your career interests, especially if it is different than your major or not obvious from the name of your specific major. If you major in civil engineering and are interested in civil engineering, you need not include an objective. However, if you have a particular focus, you should say so.

Your Education

(1) If you are seeking an internship or entry-level position, put this section near the top of your résumé. Do not put this information at the bottom of your résumé; and please, please, do not put it on page three.

(2) One person listed his high-school G.P.A. of 3.8. I did not care about his high-school performance. Besides, if I didn't bother putting my 4.6 high-school G.P.A. on my résumé, why should he put his less-impressive one there?

(3) To my great disappointment, many people wrote the dates of their education as if it were work experience. "ABC College, fall 2006-present." I don't care when you started at ABC College; just tell me when you expect to graduate.

(4) One person took this "expect to graduate" to another extreme: His résumé stated: "Master's, 2008-10; bachelor's, 2005-08." He should mention the fact if he is pre-admitted to a master's program. If he has not been admitted, that information is misleading.

Overall Presentation

(1) This same person who wrote his anticipated master's completion date had scribbled out the end date of his bachelor's term in pen. It had been 2009. I can appreciate the saving of paper, and we've done this many times with homework. However, in the case of a job hunt, you should print a new résumé. This is my first impression of you. A pen mark on an otherwise nice-looking résumé does not reflect well on you. You can use the back of the résumé with the typo as scratch paper.

(2) Use a font that provides sufficient space between words and is not all-caps.

(3) Experiment with various font sizes and margins to limit your résumé to one page. Exclude information, such as high-school information and meaningless objectives, to save space. Formatting is important; take care to highlight (i.e., boldface or underline) sectional headings, and ensure that items do not run together.

(4) Use a decent printer. Although laser is preferred, as long as the print is clean (not smudgy or blotchy), other types are fine.

(5) Do not include a generic cover letter when dropping off résumés at a job fair. A cover letter should be customized to the employer.

(6) Avoid big words just to impress. It should be easy to read quickly, while still explaining what specific tasks/projects you have completed.

Conclusion

This exercise was eye opening. I expected variety, but I expected variety only in formatting. I did not expect cryptic writing, blotchy print jobs, meaningless objectives, cross-outs, high-school content, multiple or no emails, anticipated future degrees, and education presented as work experience.

(Excerpt from Jengyee's blog at www.hellorealworld.com)