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SCREENING RESUMES: 10 TIPS TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS

By Mauri Schwartz
President/CEO Career Insiders

If you are a hiring manager or HR recruiter, you are probably overwhelmed with the number of resumes received for every job you post. So many people are applying even though they may not have all the essential qualifications. They figure, *it can't hurt to try*. It may not hurt them, but it makes your job extremely challenging.

Assuming that you are using an applicant tracking system with a keyword search feature, choose those keyword phrases carefully, focusing on the most important criteria as well as distinct phrasing so that the results match your intentions. For example, if you are recruiting for a Communications Manager position, using the word *communications* is problematic because the word is included in almost every resume as in *excellent written and verbal communication skills*.

It is a safe bet that a large number of resumes will include your search terms. These days applicants are pretty savvy in this regard. Here are a few recommendations to help diminish the time required to screen them.

1. **Functional Resume:** If most of resume is an outline of skills and matching achievements with a list of jobs with dates and no descriptions associated with each role, you cannot tell where or when he did what, and there is likelihood that the experience is stale or not significant enough.
2. **Longevity/Stability:** Check the start and end dates of each position on the resume. If there are too many short stays, you may be looking at a job hopper. Whether the person left voluntarily or was let go, this should be a red flag. Are there any long gaps between employers or even several short ones? Some resume reviewers look at the number of jobs in a given time span; six or seven jobs in a 10-year period may be too many. [Caveat: Given the ups and downs of the job market over the past decade, even the best candidates may have a short position or two, especially in the 2000-2001 dot-com bust era.]
3. **Overselling:** In reading through one or more job descriptions, the candidate may look like he is the greatest thing since sliced bread. However, practically speaking, could all of the stated achievements have been made in the specified timeframe?
4. **Ambiguity:** Because only so much information can fit onto a resume, oftentimes responsibilities are described very generally. For example, an applicant may state that she *processed monthly and quarterly financial reports* or *produced monthly and quarterly financial reports*. Did the person create spreadsheets, analyze the data, and generate the statements? Or did she simply print them out and distribute to management?
5. **Stale Experience:** I always tell my clients that in choosing information to include on their resumes, they should focus on recency and relevance. How recent is the experience that is most germane to the one for which you are recruiting?

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6. **Depth of Experience:** How long has the applicant been engaged in the applicable experience? And how much a part of his role was it? The candidate may be able to truthfully say he has the knowledge, but is it enough? Look for his length and level of participation.
7. **Spelling/Grammar:** Look for misspellings, grammatical errors and typos. If the resume is in Word format, use Spell Check with the Show Grammar Errors feature turned on. Otherwise, in your initial scan, you can look for glaring mistakes. No matter what the job, the person should be thorough in proofreading and spell checking as this is an indication of her future work product.
8. **Promotions:** Moving up within an organization is normally a sign of successful achievement. Does he have 10 years of experience or one year 10 times?
9. **Industry:** If you desire specific industry exposure, scan employer names.
10. **Education:** Does the applicant have the required credentials? Usually, the more extensive the person's relevant experience, the less importance the school, degree, and major should have, but there are always exceptions.