

Why a One-Size-Fits-All Resume Won't Get You Very Far

By Robert Half/Accountemps

Hiring managers are busy people these days. Given the ultra-competitive job market, employers are being inundated with applications for open positions. To make your resume stand out, you need to give these time-strapped hiring managers reason to pause. A key way to do this is by streamlining and customizing your document for each job you apply for, highlighting your most marketable skills for that position. Consider the following tips to get a leg up on the competition:

Cut to the chase. Unless you're applying for an executive position, it's generally best to keep your resume to one or two highly focused pages. Hiring managers value payroll candidates who can prioritize information and sell themselves succinctly, so provide a compelling but concise snapshot of who you are and what you bring to the table. Instead of describing every single task you performed in previous jobs, write a one- to two-sentence overview of your role, followed by a bulleted list of your most important duties and noteworthy achievements.

Clear the clutter. Don't muddle your message by cluttering your resume with extraneous personal information. Many job hunters meander off track by including hobbies, interests and other biographical tidbits that have little or no relevance to their professional pursuits. Before sending your resume, edit thoroughly by reviewing each point and asking yourself, "Does this add value to my candidacy?" If the answer is not an emphatic yes, delete that information or recast it in more meaningful terms.

Zero in on your targets. Customization is critical to making your resume stand out, but not all job seekers remember to adjust theirs. Rather than creating a standard one-size-fits-all document that you submit to every firm with an open position, tailor your resume to each individual opportunity. Research the firm and use the job ad as your guide, emphasizing your skills, credentials and attributes that are most germane to their unique needs. This may mean focusing on your payroll compliance practitioner (PCP) certification and "strong presentation skills" for one prospective employer, while playing up your "self-directed" nature and "proven ability to maintain accuracy with minimal supervision" for another.

In short, crafting a targeted resume is a smart and strategic move that will help you to stand apart from less-diligent payroll candidates. While you don't need to start from scratch every time you come across a new position of interest, customizing your one- to two-page document is well worth the extra effort.

For more career and management advice, listen to "The Management Minute," Robert Half's podcast series, at <http://www.rhi.com/Podcast>.

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