

FIVE BLUNDERS THAT CAN TRIP UP YOUR JOB SEARCH

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A-1 Quality Resumes

Most executive job-seeking candidates have the best intentions, when searching for new opportunities. However, heed these five blunders, to avoid tripping yourself up before getting your foot in the door:

- 1. BEING UNREACHABLE BY PHONE.** Nothing irritates hiring managers more than trying to contact a candidate by phone and getting a constant busy signal or a phone that just rings. I've experienced this same frustration when I've attempted to telephone a client, family member, or friend that I must speak to immediately. When I finally do reach them, they sheepishly confess: "I was on the Internet," "my daughter/son/spouse was on the phone" or "my cat stepped on the answering machine and turned it off." While these explanations are sufficient for family and friends, they are flimsy excuses to give hiring managers. **To ensure that hiring managers can always get in touch with you:**
 - **Upgrade your landline service.** Contact your telecom provider and purchase voice mail, "no-answer transfer to voice mail" and "call waiting" features for your existing telephone line. These options will assure that an incoming caller can either speak directly with you or leave a message, whether you are online or speaking with another caller. Voicemail will continue to take messages if your phone is accidentally off the hook or in the event of answering machine failure.
 - **Get a second landline or cellular phone** with the above-mentioned features, to be used strictly for your job search -- and be sure that the telephone number is listed on your résumé! For cell phone service, purchase a package that allows maximum service area coverage, regardless of where you travel. This will ensure that callers will get through without hearing: *"The person you are trying to reach has traveled outside the service area. Please try your call again."*
 - **Record a clear, identifiable outgoing message on your voicemail.** This message should be recorded in your voice (not your child's) without background music or other distracting noises. Keep your message short and simple, and be sure to identify yourself, so your callers know right away they are reaching you. An outgoing message such as: "Hello, you've reached John Smith. Please leave your name, telephone number, and a brief message, and I'll call you back as soon as possible. Thank you." is sufficient!
- 2. USING AN INAPPROPRIATE EMAIL ADDRESS.** It's okay to use humorous email addresses when communicating with family and friends. However, to portray yourself seriously to hiring managers, choose a businesslike email address exclusively for your résumé and job searching efforts. I've reviewed thousands of résumés in my career and some of the most appalling email addresses I've seen have ranged from TV shows to off-color physical attributes! **To avoid turning off hiring managers and losing out on potential job opportunities:**
 - **Choose an email address as close to your own name as possible.** For example, if your name is John B. Smith, a good e-mail address is JBSmith@anyisp.com or JohnSmith@anyisp.com. Should the screen name you choose be unavailable through your ISP, you can add numbers after your name in combinations that make sense to you (like your birthday or street address) such as JBSmith425@anyismp.com
 - **Take advantage of multiple screen names your ISP offers.** This way, you can keep your fun email addresses, while using other ones for business purposes. Some ISPs offer up to 10 screen names for each account.
- 3. FORMATTING RÉSUMÉS INCORRECTLY WHEN SENDING VIA EMAIL.** It is critical to email your résumé in correct software format. Otherwise your recipient will be unable to open your file or will get

text resembling non-discernable hieroglyphics -- the electronic equivalent of sending a poor-quality hard copy! **To be sure your résumé can be easily downloaded and read every time:**

- **Use Microsoft Word (.doc) Rich Text Format (.rtf) or Text (.txt).** You might be fond of WordPerfect or MS Works. However, very few people use WordPerfect anymore (except for law firms) and Microsoft Corporation no longer manufactures or supports MS Works. The downside to sending Text or Rich Text Format files is that the formatting disappears in the transmission, even though the text will stay intact.
- **Use PDF (Portable Document Format).** You'll need special software to convert your résumé to PDF format and you must also be sure that your recipient has "Acrobat Reader" to open the file.
- **Do a test run before sending to a hiring manager.** Before emailing your résumé to hiring managers, send a test-run to friends and family members, so you can correct any errors beforehand. Chances are, what they see is what hiring managers will get!

5. FAILING TO NURTURE YOUR NETWORK. Benjamin Franklin said it best: "Tart words make no friends: a spoonful of honey will catch more flies than a gallon of vinegar." People tend to refer business leads or job opportunities to people they like, so be mindful about the way you treat others. When you are kind and sincere to people, the greater the likelihood that someone in your network (or someone else they know) could connect you to your next career opportunity. **Here are some simple ways to stay in touch with and nurture your network:**

- **Communicate considerately.** Return all telephone calls, emails, and written correspondence in a timely manner. Apologize for unusually late responses.
- **Express sincere appreciation** for gifts, referrals, and random acts of kindness.
- **Congratulate colleagues, business associates, family and friends** on recent accomplishments or good fortune.
- **Offer helpful information**, such as a newspaper article or key resource, depending on the person's needs.

6. FORGETTING TO SAY "THANK YOU" to everyone who has helped you in your job search. Saying these magic words keeps your network working for you! When people in your network know that you really appreciate their help, they will keep on supplying you with job leads, support and other useful information. **Here are some "thank you" guidelines:**

- **Be sure to thank everybody** who has introduced you to an important contact, passed on a job lead, provided you with a great reference, or convinced a hiring manager to interview you.
- **Even if a job lead or contact doesn't pan out, thank the referring person anyway.** This individual could be influential in uncovering another opportunity or could get back in touch with the hiring manager, to reinforce your qualifications and candidacy. **You never know!**
- **Saying "thank you" is always welcomed, whether you do it via telephone or written communication. Regardless of which medium you choose, simply follow Nike Corporation's slogan -- "Just do it!"**

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