Top 5 common resume mistakes and how to avoid them

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If you have ever tried to write a resume, for yourself or for someone you know, you are already familiar with the fact that this is not an easy task to take on. So much information goes into a resume; from your career objective to the list of your qualifications, your resume should be personal, convey confidence and set your best foot forward in order to impress a potential employer. However, creating a winning resume is not easy. The following are the most commonly made mistakes in resume composition:

Including references to personal web sites.

You may wonder why referencing a personal web site may be a mistake. What if you have a sample of your graphic design work on your site that you want your potential employer to see? It sounds like a great idea, if the site you are referencing only has work-related information available. Many people make a mistake of including their personal web sites that may contain information potential employers may find irrelevant (and now you are wasting their time) or inappropriate.

As a rule, do not include your personal web site if it contains your photo or other photos that may be viewed as inappropriate, if it contains jokes (even if they are clean jokes), or your blog. In other words, if the site you have is entirely for personal purposes, you are best leaving it off your resume.

Include a link to your web site if the pages are set up to showcase your professional portfolio, a copy of your resume, reference letters, presentations, photos taken for professional use, or your web development skills.

- Using very small fonts in order to get everything to fit on one page.

One of the most common challenges is creating a resume that formats well on a single page. As a rule, a resume should not exceed two pages. However, in recent years, it has become commonplace for professionals to change jobs frequently, and listing all the experiences, in addition to your career objective, education, qualifications and references, can certainly take up a lot of space.

Do not use a small font in order to fit everything into your resume. There is not a single area in your resume that should have a font size of less than 10 points. Keep in mind the font type you are using – stick to the basics, Arial and Times New Roman are your best bet. Instead of changing the font size, review and revise your resume to make your statements more concise.

- Incorrect company/school listings.

The biggest mistake people make, without realizing that they are making it, is not referring to the past employers and/or the school(s) they've attended by their full names. Do not use variations of company and school names. Don't use abbreviations unless they are in fact part of the name. If you have attended New York University, list the complete name, not just NYU (even though it's commonly known and your employer will likely recognize it). You don't want to appear sloppy or as if you don't pay attention to details.

- Lengthy paragraphs describing your experiences.

To list the responsibilities you've had in your past professional experience, you are best off using bullet points that begin with action verbs, such as managed, developed, etc. You do not need to use full sentences, and you certainly do not need to use the paragraph format. This makes the information in your resume overwhelming and difficult to review quickly. Make your statements brief and clear; don't add words to fill in space.

- Typos.

The most important factor in achieving a winning resume is proof reading. You want to put your best foot forward. If your resume contains grammar and spelling problems, your potential employer will get an impression that you are not detail-oriented. It is hard to proof a document you have been working on so closely – use spell check (but be ware, it will not catch everything), ask your friends for help, meet with a career counselor. Do your best to present the most polished resume to your potential employers.