

Newsletter

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Recruiters Not Calling You?

Five Reasons Why—And How To Fix It

You've been hoping for a new job, but your phone is silent. No recruiters calling, no job offers; it's so quiet you can almost hear the crickets outside. Maybe it's time to reassess.

Does this sound like your job search efforts?

You've sent out hundreds of resumes to countless job postings but received little or no response. You've left dozens of voice mails to recruiters explaining why you are a perfect fit—and they never return your call. You've tweaked your resume so many times you no longer recognize it. If this describes your situation, you are not alone. Many talented, qualified job seekers get ignored by recruiters and hiring managers simply because their resume has one or more of the following problems.

1. Your resume highlights your lack of industry experience

Most recruiters are looking for a point-by-point candidate match when screening resumes. Industry background usually ranks high on the list of qualifying issues. If you don't have experience in that industry, your resume is going straight to the circular file—unless you can give them a compelling reason to keep your resume in the stack.

If you lack specific industry experience, but you know you have the basic skills for the job, try highlighting your transferable skills instead. Job seekers who lack industry experience can make it past the resume screener by proving their ability with skills they have that transfer from industry to industry. Examples of transferable skills include expertise gained in sales, customer service, finance, accounting, negotiation, cross-functional communications, and/or team building. Look at the skills they need, then figure out how your background is a match.

2. Your resume shouts "Overqualified!"

Nothing scares off a recruiter faster than a candidate who is obviously overqualified for the job. The two main concerns are (1) that the candidate would soon get bored and leave at his earliest convenience, and

(2) that the candidate would be too expensive to hire. Even worse is the assumption that the over qualified candidate is on a downward career slope—a has-been with all his best years behind him.

There are, however, many valid reasons job seekers wish to downsize to jobs with fewer responsibilities. Whatever your reasons, tailor your resume to fit your current career objective. This means you'll want to play down your prior responsibilities, list only relevant education (don't list a PhD if you are applying for a mid-level management position!), and emphasize tactical experience over strategic planning when appropriate.

3. Your resume is crammed with information, but not the right kind

Pity the poor recruiter who must get through 200 applicant resumes before lunchtime. If your resume is in the pile, it will get a quick scan and pass over if she can't find what she is looking for in less than 30 seconds. If you have a resume that is disorganized or full of dense blocks of text, how will the recruiter learn anything about you?

You'll catch the recruiter's attention if you have a clear, easy-to-read resume that highlights your skills and accomplishments, even at a glance. The first rule of resume effectiveness is relevancy, so edit out the past data and redundant facts that aren't relevant to your current career path. Fill your resume only with the skills needed for that particular job, and you'll go a long way toward getting a recruiter's attention.

4. Your resume has too little information

While the "strong, silent type" may be attractive in men, it just plain flops in a resume. A resume that looks more like an outline just doesn't give the reader enough to work with. Recruiters don't want to guess what you did at your last job. You need to include enough information to give prospective employers a vision of the possibilities if they choose to hire you.

If you struggle with what to include in your resume, use job descriptions to help you understand what recruiters will want to find in your resume. Then review your previous jobs to determine what skills you have that will be a good match.

5. Your resume doesn't include accomplishments

If you haven't thought lately about how your employer has benefited from having you as an employee, it's a sure bet that your resume is lacking in accomplishments. Remember, as a job seeker you are selling your talents, and you are competing with many others who have the same qualifications as you do. Accomplishments give

recruiters a reason to choose you over others for the interview short list.

Give screeners ample reason to select you for interview. Highlight how you have saved time, increased efficiency, cut cost and increased client satisfaction. After all, if you don't tell them, nobody else will!

If you use this five-point checklist to restructure your resume, you'll soon hear back from recruiters who appreciate qualified, articulate and confident candidates. The time you spend enhancing your resume could shave off months of fruitless labor and frustrating effort in your job search.

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