

Resume Tips for Communications Job Searchers

In the last few years, I've conducted many searches that always include the review of resumes, and have had many people send me their resumes for my files. As a result I've decided to share some tips that I've learned along the way. You may not all agree, but here is what I look for (and not):

1. Accurate and error-free resumes and cover letters DO matter! If your resume contains spelling, grammar or other errors...I'm not likely to have faith in your work.
2. Dates ARE important. I want to know WHEN you worked at each place and WHEN you graduated from each educational institution. I'm not trying to guess your age, but I am trying to understand context for everything.
3. Use the actual title for your degrees or diplomas. If you don't use the correct title and the date, I'm going to wonder if you actually graduated.
4. NEVER lie on your resume. I WILL check with the educational institution to make sure you really did graduate (and I HAVE caught a fraudster before) and I MAY check on actual accomplishments or other employment data.
5. I have a strong preference for a resume that follows your career chronologically and tells me what you actually were responsible for in each job. The resumes that mush together all of your "skills" and then puts a simple list of jobs at the end don't work for me. Again, it's all about context. I need to know WHERE you did that great communications plan (because then I will understand how complex the situation was, who you worked with and what their standards were etc.) or other project.
6. DO tell me about more than what you were responsible for. If you can tell me about your accomplishments, including some idea of measurement I'm going to be VERY impressed. I see this in only about one or two in a hundred so they really stand out!
7. DO use your cover letter to – explain briefly why you are a good fit for what the job posting asked for (a table summarizing the comparison is very helpful); use the correct name and title for the application process; show me that you have some idea what the organization you're applying to does; let me know if there are any specific dates that I need to know about (you'll be on vacation during the selection process or out of town on business etc.); let me know how you prefer to be contacted (cell, home, okay to contact at current job).
8. DO state your attributes with confidence and a positive attitude, but DON'T overdo it! People who tell me they are the "best" at something or "superior" or other terms like that make my "style/attitude issues" radar go off.
9. When you send a soft copy resume to a potential employer or search firm, DO title it with your complete first and last name. If you want the receiver to be able to file it easily in their soft copy files, help them do so by making it a "one click" save.

I hope this is helpful to those of you who are looking for work.