



How To Use Résumés in the Hiring Process

RÉSUMÉS HAVE A PURPOSE, BUT THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY FACTOR IN A KEY EMPLOYEE SEARCH.

By Martin Zahra

Résumés are instruments as much as documents. They are tools designed to open doors and begin discussions. They are not autobiographies or memoirs, and they are not the final word on a person's value as a professional.

There is a tendency in our hyperdigitized world to reduce people to their résumés. In this way of thinking, a professional is merely a collection of titles and dates, describing an arc through a set of businesses and locations.

Experience is, of course, the most reliable predictor of future success. But a professional is more than his or her résumé. A quick

transition in and out of a certain company may have a story behind it. A missing college credit may speak to a personal circumstance beyond the scope of the résumé. Strong candidates get missed when a résumé is rejected out of hand — often by a computer system.

As a longtime executive recruiter with a focus on horticulture, I have the benefit of observing recruitment from both sides, with candidates and companies. With candidates, I encourage a highly personalized approach. Use a résumé to get a foot in the door, but guide the dialogue toward phone calls and meetings whenever possible.

I advise companies to invest in personal recruitment, too. When managers take a few minutes to build rapport with candidates, the trade takes notice. In the long run, it is these sorts of habits that give

a company its *je ne sais quoi* and build a loyal and respectful team. Rigid statistical filters, such as personality tests and résumé parsing, can be helpful in cases involving a very high number of applications, but they are no substitute for human intuition and connection, and at the earliest opportunity, managers should swoop in to solve the problem themselves rather than leaving it up to the machines. ■



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