RÉSUMÉ RED FLAGS

Despite any personal preferences recruiters and head hunters may have when reading résumés, they generally agree the following characteristics can hinder a candidate's chances...

1 CRYPTIC
Résumés should explain what a candidate has done in explicit, tangible terms. Rather than assume that titles, positions, acronyms. copy-and-paste job descriptions, and the like are self-explanatory, describe what you did, how, with what tools and resources, for whom, and with what effect.

2 DUTY-FOCUSED
Résumés should move beyond simply listing employee duties and responsibilities for a given position, presuming readers can infer how (or even if) a candidate completed that work. Explain what you accomplished and the impact your efforts made toward larger organizational goals.

3 VERBOSE
Résumés should fully, yet concisely describe candidate credentials. Taking too long to say too little suggests artificially inflated experience, inefficiency, arrogance, or worse.

4 IRRELEVANT
Résumés should highlight the training, skills, and experiences that qualify the candidate for a position. Remove information about paths not taken, as well as details that give employers ways to discriminate (e.g., height, weight, health, marital status).

5 INDISCRIMINANT
Résumés provide an abridged, one-page annotation of a candidate's industry qualifications. Unless you've been employed for decades and have substantial experience directly related to the target position, select the most salient details to make your case for an interview.

6 DISORGANIZED
Résumés should help readers find main categories and key details within seconds. Group similar types of details and use consistent formatting for like-entries to help readers quickly locate the information they want and need.

7 POORLY DESIGNED
Résumés should reflect a candidate's familiarity with the industry's values and personality. Choose layouts, typefaces, and designs that echo the larger field, and use font sizes, line spacing, and margins to ensure information is easy to read and, if necessary, forward or print.

8 VISUALLY SUPERFICIAL
Résumés that rely on decorative typefaces, colors, graphics, and so forth can distract from the clarity of the presentation and suggest the candidate is desperate or overcompensating for weak or missing credentials. Hook readers' attention with your experience.

9 UNPROFESSIONAL
Résumés showcase both a candidate's competency for a position and proficiency in other areas, such as language use and attention to details. Spellcheck and grammar programs help, but don't catch all errors (e.g., homophones, inappropriate diction, missing or extra words). Proofread your résumé multiple times before distribution.

10 MISDIRECTED
Résumés should reach people who are actively working with application materials; sending materials to generic readers (e.g., To Whom it May Concern, Dear Sir/Madam), inappropriate staff members (e.g., CEOs seldom read first-round applications), or divisions with no apparent link to the candidate's training can undermine an application's success. Research both the organization and the particular position to find where and to whom you should submit materials for consideration.