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Finding the Perfect Resume: How to Supercharge your search

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Finding the perfect resume:

How to supercharge your search

Looking for the perfect candidate by searching through thousands of resumes can be challenging. Job seekers don't always put the right information on their resumes, and resume search tools can sometimes seem intimidating or difficult to use. Yet there are key techniques and approaches you can use to locate the perfect resume, no matter how large the pool of candidates.



Getting ready to search

The first step to locating the perfect resume is mapping out exactly the type of person you are seeking to fill your open position. Answer the following three questions:

1. What does the position entail?
2. Which requirements are absolutely required? Which are preferred?
3. Which skills would make the candidate an exceptional find?



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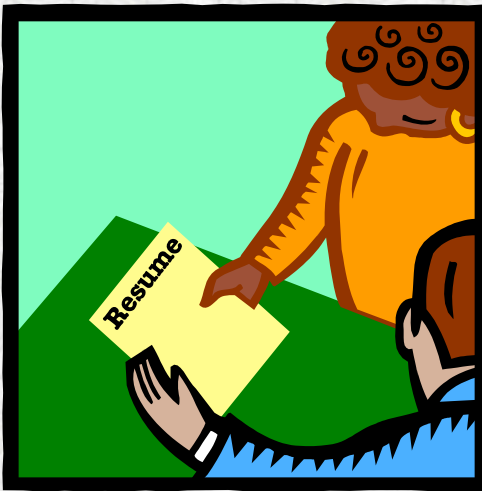
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Write out the answers. Determine which requirements and skills are non-negotiable, and which would be 'nice to have.' These will determine how you structure your resume search.

What's in a resume—and what isn't

In your recruiting effort, make sure that you understand what is and isn't conveyed on a resume. For example, a resume is excellent for giving you the history of an individual's employment; but, it won't tell you if that person works well with others. Knowing this shortcoming of resumes, many companies conduct 'company fit' assessments during the interview process.



When examining the resume, also keep in mind that a candidate's lack of a few specific skills may be offset by your organization's capacity to train. If the candidate looks good in other respects and has a solid work history, you may want to simply train on the missing skill. Don't get caught in the trap of looking for the 'ideal candidate,' as it can often result in overlooking a good one.

Where do you find a resume?

There are two primary ways companies acquire resumes:

1. Collecting resumes in response to a posted job; and
2. Acquiring resumes via a resume database.

Receiving a resume in response to a posted job usually means that the job seeker is interested in your company and the open position. The main limitation to this method of acquiring resumes is that you are limited by the number of places your job is posted. If you are only posting your job on your company's Web site, you will probably not



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receive much response. However, if you post your job on a major job board with significant job seeker traffic, you may see higher responses.

Acquiring resumes via a resume database is a proactive approach on your part. You purchase access to the database (which is usually provided by a job board or similar service), then use a search tool to locate the types of resumes you need. The remainder of this white paper explains specifically how to do this.

The advantage to locating resumes with this technique is that you are in control—you are only limited by your time and the size and focus of the resume database. The main challenge to this approach is locating a resume database that contains the types of candidates you seek.

How almost every resume search tool works

Despite the fact that there are thousands of job board resume banks available, most share a number of key functions. Why? Because the function of a resume search tool is to provide the user with an easy and intuitive way of locating specific types of resumes.

What are the key parts of a resume search tool?

- Keyword search
- Job title search
- Location search
- Years of experience

Using each of these options, either alone or in combination, you can find a specific type of resume through the process of searching and then narrowing or refining your search based on your initial results.



Creating and narrowing your search



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To begin your search, you will enter a few terms to describe your search—for example, 'electrical estimator.' Perhaps you will also add a location ('Georgia') and the minimum number of years experience you require ('3-5 years'). Most resume search tools will provide predefined drop-down menus for these latter two search variables.

A word to the wise: don't make your search too narrow. It's better to begin with a broad, general search, and then gradually refine it. Also, if you start with a wide net, you're more likely to see resumes that are good fits but aren't necessarily what you originally thought you needed.

Following on that concept, a good way of narrowing your initial search is to use a 'perfect fit' resume as your model. It is likely that you'll come across at least one or two resumes in your first search that are very good fits. Look at them closely and determine which elements are most important. Use those items to refine your search. (And of course, set these resumes aside for future contact!).

Using keywords and certifications



Perhaps your initial search turned up thousands of resumes. That's good—you have plenty of raw material to work with. Now it's time to narrow your search to a manageable amount.

In addition to the method mentioned above of using a 'perfect resume,' you can add keywords and certifications to your search to help narrow the

field of potential candidates. For example, to refine the original keywords 'electrical estimator,' add the term 'commercial.' This will help limit your results to those estimators who focus on the commercial sector.



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If the search tool you are using allows, you should also include the most important certifications needed for this position. These certifications may be required or highly desired. For the 'electrical estimator' position, you may want the person to be a licensed master electrician. Again, the purpose of using keywords and certification is to make your search more tightly focused and aligned with the type of person you're trying to recruit.

The end result should be a small, manageable group of resumes that represent the type of person who could best fill your open job.

How to read a resume

Once you've located your targeted group of resumes, you will next need to evaluate them. Below are a few common-sense guidelines that will help you decide who actually becomes someone you'll interview:

- Don't focus on what a resume **doesn't say**. Instead, ask yourself, "Why should I call this person?" The best resume writer is not necessarily the best person to hire.
- Always start from the bottom of the resume (oldest experience first). If you start from the top, you may disqualify a person because they don't have **recent** experience in a particular area. Often the same person may have done the work in a previous job.
- Ask yourself, "What must the candidate do to perform the advertised job?." For example, how likely is it that a good HVAC technician would not have customer contact? In reality, almost all technicians deal with customers—but they may not always put the information on their resume. Don't rule them out if everything else looks good.



- Remember: titles don't equal experience. Duties assigned with a title change from one company to the next. For example, a Service Manager in one organization could simply be the dispatcher, but in another company, a person of the same title might be running P&L and multi-million dollar budgets.
- Just because the candidate doesn't have a stable job history doesn't mean they are a bad candidate. Things change. Companies close; some positions are contract. Find out why.
- Does this jobseeker have transferable skills? I.e. computer programmers may know little about heating and cooling, but could easily learn to program control systems.
- Don't review stacks of resumes at once; you'll become frustrated and may start 'grouping' resumes into categories.

Following up

After putting in the time to search for the right resumes and the additional time to screen and evaluate, the most important thing you can do is call the potential candidate. What can you accomplish in a telephone conversation? Plenty.

- You can quickly and efficiently determine if the candidate has skills you require that were not listed on his or her resume.
- You can obtain an initial impression of the candidate's personality and presentation.
- You can gauge the candidate's interest level in your job opportunity.

Remember –you won't know unless you call. Remind yourself that the right candidate is probably someone who can learn the skills you require. If the candidate has the core experience you need and is the



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right fit for your organization, don't mark them off the list because of one missing skill.

Finally, always be aware of opportunities for networking. Even if the candidate you've contacted isn't interested or isn't the right person, they may very well know someone who is. Ask them for referrals. In return, offer to refer the candidate to other employers if appropriate. You will be pleasantly surprised at how often this approach produces candidates who are simply nowhere else to be found.



The final result

The goal of your supercharged resume search is simple – fewer resumes producing better results. Instead of wading through hundreds or even thousands of ill-matched resumes, you now know how to start a broad search and then quickly narrow it down. You're also versed in how to read a resume to gain the maximum benefit from it.

Remember:

- A great job candidate may not be a great resume writer.
- Don't fret over the 'perfect match' – focus on what you need to get the job done.
- Start broad – then narrow your search.
- Read past the candidate's job title and focus on their skills.

The final outcome? You should find better candidates, obtain a better fit with your company, and achieve a higher likelihood of successful hires.



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