

Five Things Job Candidates Obsess Over That Hiring Managers Don't

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Have you crafted a beautiful resume with the perfect typeface? You might be focusing on the wrong aspects of the process, as hiring managers are just looking to find qualified people. Here are five things that people put too much emphasis on that hiring managers actually don't care about.

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It doesn't matter how much work experience you have, or how many interviews you've knocked out of the park—job hunting is bound to make even the most confident candidates feel insecure.

And since so many factors are out of your control—like whether you'll hear back about that perfect fit opportunity—it's no wonder many people find themselves attempting to regain a little power by obsessing over what they *can* control. But the truth is, not all job-search details are make-or-break.

To help you discern what's worth your worry—and what's definitely not—we chatted with two career experts to identify five easy-to-obsess-over details that hiring managers really don't care about... and what to focus on instead.

How Fancy Your Resume Looks

In today's competitive job market, it's crucial to make your C.V. shine brighter than the hundreds of others on a hiring manager's desk. Often, that pressure leads people to toil over the glossiest resume template—with fancy fonts, bold pops of color and custom sub-sections—in an effort to express their exceptional flair for style.

But unless you're applying for a design position and need to showcase those skills, Alison Green, a former nonprofit chief of staff and author of the [AskaManager blog](#), is giving you permission to quit obsessing.

"No employer is going to hire you just because you have a beautifully laid-out resume," she says. "Plus, it makes it look like you don't have a clear idea of what things really matter."

What Does Matter: "Standing out is about the strength of your candidacy, which is something you can't buy, fake or promote through even *the* most beautiful font choice," Green says.

If you really want to prove you're a strong candidate, create an easily readable document that prominently highlights your professional accomplishments.

For example, maybe you exceeded your sales targets for three years in a row, successfully serviced your company's most difficult account, or were chosen to represent your department at a major industry conference—make sure these points stand out on your C.V.

One other thing to keep in mind? Stick to the facts, Green says, adding that hiring managers won't give much weight to overly subjective descriptions and self-assessments you can't substantiate, like "excellent management skills" or "creative communicator."

Sending a Handwritten Thank-You Note

Back in the day, a thoughtfully composed, handwritten note was considered to be the best way to properly complete the interview process. But fast-forward to today's hyper-connected world, when even hiring seems to move much faster—causing many job seekers to stress about the appropriate way to reach out post-interview.

Stacey Hawley, a career and leadership development coach and founder of The Credo Company, insists that stressing over *how* you follow up isn't what hiring managers are concerned about.

"Interviewers just care that they get [a note]," she says, adding that it's best to send it—using the medium of your choice—within 48 hours of your meeting.

What Does Matter: Rather than simply thanking hiring managers for their time—something that doesn't add value to the decision-making process—Hawley says to make sure your note contains meaningful information that proves you were paying attention and are still interested in the position.

"Think about the conversation, and write something both personal and business-related," she suggests. "Tell them how much you appreciated discussing a certain business topic, then thank them for sharing their insights about something personal."

Whether Your Resume Fits on One Page

You've probably heard traditional career advice that warns job seekers against submitting a resume that spills over to two or more pages.

After all, a 2012 study found hiring managers spend just *six seconds* reviewing a candidate's materials before determining whether the person is a good fit.

So those hours you spent editing, adjusting margins, and tweaking the font size to squeeze every last bit of information on a single page seems reasonable enough.

But Green says you can throw this advice out the window—if you've been out of college for at least five years and have enough legitimate experience to include.

What Does Matter: Now that you have carte blanche to make your resume as long—or short—as you see fit, concentrate on making sure you've highlighted only the most pertinent facts from your job history.

"Hiring managers often skim a resume first, so jam-packing yours with every job you've ever had reduces the chance that their eye will land on what you truly want them to see," Green says.

So give the majority of your resume's real estate to the most recent and relevant information—and downplay the rest. "You could even put the internships or junior positions together without bullet points," Green

adds. "You don't need to treat them with equal weight [compared to full-time staff positions]."

Another option? Organize your resume by "Relevant Experience" and "Other Work Experience," rather than chronological order. "This allows you to highlight the experiences and skills that the hiring manager or recruiter is most interested in, while still addressing your overall work history," Green says.

Crafting a Clever Cover Letter

If writer's block always seems to hit just as you sit down to write the perfect cover letter, you certainly wouldn't be alone.

But the truth is that a cover letter doesn't have to be that complicated. "Just imagine you're writing an email to a friend about why you'd be perfect for this job," Green says. " *That's* the tone you want."

What Does Matter: The key to a great cover letter is to emphasize the passions and personal traits that make you uniquely qualified to excel in a particular job—but don't come across in your resume.

"Somewhere along the line, people got the idea that a cover letter should offer the same details as your resume, but it's the opposite," Green says. "If all you do is summarize your work history, you're squandering an opportunity."

She offers an example of a woman who applied for an administrative position, but didn't have as much experience as other candidates Green was considering.

"In her cover letter, the woman explained how her friends teased her for neurotically color-coding her closet and alphabetizing her spices, and she talked about how she's known in her peer group for her love of organization," Green says. "You cannot put that in a resume. But it told me so much about the type of person she was, and likely the type of approach she would have to that job."

The result? The woman scored an interview—and the job.

Why You Haven't Heard Back

Whether you've just submitted your resume and are wondering if you'll be called for an interview, or you're waiting to hear if you'll be asked back for a second one, it's hard to be patient... or think of anything else.

Hawley sympathizes—but warns job seekers not to check in too often.

"For them, this is a major event in their lives, but for the interviewers, they're meeting other people and, of course, working! Work gets in the way of the interview process all of the time," she says. "I know it's hard, but be patient. The last thing you should do is email the interviewers and ask when you'll hear back—repeatedly."

What Does Matter: If you do snag an interview, satisfy your curiosity by asking for a timeline before you leave. "If you know when the powers-that-be want to make a decision by, it's reasonable to check in after that point for an update," Green says.

After that, shift your focus back to what you can control: continuing your job search.

"For your mental health, the best thing you can do is pretend you didn't get the job as soon as you walk out the door," Green says. "Put it out of your mind. Then you won't agonize day after day."

Bonus: You'll be pleasantly surprised when you *do* get that phone call with an offer.