



LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB

**(OR THINKING ABOUT IT?)
WHAT YOU SHOULD
KNOW FIRST...**

Bad Words to Use on Your Resume

Mar 26, 2014 04:26PM



You wouldn't dream of peppering your resume with four-letter words and other epithets, would you? Unfortunately, there are other words and phrases that can do just as much damage to your hiring chances. In fact, these terms can be even *more* dangerous because they fly off your fingers and onto your resume without a second thought.

According to a new CareerBuilder survey of hiring managers and HR professionals, the five worst words you can use on your resume are *best of breed*, *go-getter*, *think outside of the box*, *synergy*, and *go-to person*.

Why are these phrases so heinous? Let's review.

Best of breed. Let's face it, "best of breed" makes you sound like a dog. What breed are you? Yorkshire terrier? Pomeranian? Wiener? What's next, *Best in Show*?

Go-getter. What exactly are you going to get? You are not Inspector Gadget. I read “go-getter” and I think, “Go, gadget, go”! Slap this cliché on your resume and prepare to *go get* a permanent seat at the unemployment office.

Think outside of the box. I can’t help but recall Taco Bell’s old “Think outside the bun” slogan whenever I hear this cheesy, overused phrase. When hiring managers see this on your resume they’ll think *you’re* cheesy – and not in a tasty way like the Cheesy Gordita Crunch is.

Synergy. Do you remember “In Good Company,” the Dennis Quaid flick that came out a decade ago? No? Netflix it now, I’ll wait ... OK, you know the part when young upstart Topher Grace decides that “synergy” is the answer to all the company’s woes? SPOILER ALERT: He gets laid off when the plan goes south. Steer clear of synergy.

Go-to person. Where are you going? Hopefully it’s somewhere far, far away, where you will never be able to use this ho-hum phrase again.

Other blah resume buzzwords reported by CareerBuilder include *thought leadership, value added, results-driven, team player, bottom-line, hard worker, strategic thinker, dynamic, self-motivated, detail-oriented, proactive, and track record.*

Winning Words for Your Resume

Now that you know what *not* to do, take a look at the winning words that surveyed hiring managers actually want to see in your resume: **achieved, improved, trained/mentored, managed, created, resolved, volunteered, influenced, increased/decreased, ideas, negotiated, launched, revenue/profits, under budget, and won.**

Notice a theme? The majority of these terms are verbs that highlight specific accomplishments. These words are particularly powerful when followed by measurable data, with numbers and dollar amounts whenever possible.

“Hiring managers prefer strong action words that define specific experience, skills, and accomplishments,” confirms Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources at CareerBuilder. “Subjective terms and clichés are seen as negative because they don’t convey real information.”

So how can you rid your resume of these terrible, horrible, no good, very bad

words? Employ the age-old wisdom of “show, don’t tell.”

For instance, says Haefner, “Don’t say you are ‘results-driven’; show the employer your actual results.”

With a *proactive* approach like that, you’ll become the firm’s *go-to person* in no time.

The Ins and Outs of Unemployment

Apr 23, 2014 02:41PM



If you've never been let go from a job before, you probably have no idea what being unemployment is really all about. However, by approaching your job loss with a positive outlook, and being proactive about staying afloat financially while you search for your next opportunity, you can come through your unemployment seamlessly.

Here's what you need to know...

You'll have to **explain your unemployment** to everyone, from family and friends, to potential employers. It will help if you have your answer ready to go, something along the lines of "the company decided it was going to outsource my position." Giving a reasonable explanation can help satisfy those who might be upset on your behalf. You'll want to be truthful, however, especially on a job interview in the same industry since news/rumors travel quickly.

The longer you're unemployed, the more productive you'll need to be. While the

stigma of getting laid off might not be what it once was since the economy tanked, **if you end up unemployed for an extended period of time, a potential employer might have a negative perception** of that. However, if you can show that you used the time to take on a volunteer endeavor, or go back to school to earn a certification, you'll illustrate that you're committed to learning and growing.

You can't put off financial matters. In fact, if you plan to file for unemployment benefits, you should do so immediately, as they can take some time to kick in. If you're fortunate enough to get a severance package, you still shouldn't wait to file since that won't affect your unemployment eligibility. Along those lines, square away your health insurance coverage, whether you're going to pay for COBRA, or be added to your spouse's insurance coverage, if that's an option. The last thing you need when you don't have any income is for your coverage to lapse, and you get hit with an unexpected medical bill.

Speaking of **unemployment benefits** ... Be sure to read up on your state's rules if you plan to pick up part time work, or freelance, as it can affect your benefits. Some states may deduct a certain amount from your unemployment check if you earn over a set limit, and if there are weeks when you make too much, an extra week will be tacked on to the unemployment benefits period.

Leave on a positive note. This is easier said than done, especially if your layoff comes as a surprise. But remember – a future employer may ask for a reference at your old company, so you don't want to say something that could hurt you down the line. In fact, it's a good idea to reach out to your former colleagues and ask for letters of reference and/or endorsements on LinkedIn before too much time passes, as they will be more eager to help you while the layoff is still fresh.

Being unemployed is practically a rite of passage, as it happens to nearly everyone at some point. How you handle yourself can make all the difference as to what the next phase of your career will be.

The Post-Interview Waiting Game

Apr 23, 2014 06:00PM



As an optimistic job seeker, you may have visualized things going so great in the interview room, that you've pictured the hiring manager asking, "Can you start tomorrow?" While that may happen in some instances, the reality is you should expect the hiring process to take way longer than that.

Cue the "Jeopardy!" theme song...

According to a study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the average number of days it takes to go from interview to offer for new graduates is 24. From there, tack on another 13 days to go from offer to acceptance.

In other words, patience and perseverance are important attributes to have when you're on the job hunt. Here are a couple of other things to keep in mind as you wait to get hired:

There may be multiple steps in the interview process.

Depending on the nature of the position you're seeking and the company culture of your potential employer, you could experience very different hiring tactics. At some organizations, you might endure three or four call backs to meet different team members, and be evaluated in different ways. For some industries, you might be required to pass an exam of some sort, or offer some ideas so they can get a sense of how you think. Each extra step can add more time.

The larger the company, the bigger the stack of paperwork to get through.

While that's not a scientific fact, the point is you should expect to jump through a few extra HR hoops for bigger organizations, perhaps including background checks, drug testing, etc.

Follow up without pestering. You want to make sure you answer any follow up questions/requests in a timely manner, such as if the company asks for an additional list of references or work samples. As for when all you hear is crickets, it's perfectly OK to check in after a few days, and email is probably the best option since calling busy hiring managers could turn them off. Here's a hint: On the interview itself, it's always a good idea to ask when you might expect to hear back, or when/how would be a good time to follow up. That way, you can gauge what the waiting time might be, and get a sense of how they preferred to be contacted.

Don't wait until you're ready to start working to apply.

Whether you're finishing up school, an internship, or are currently employed but want to find something better, being proactive about applying for a new position can help fast track an otherwise slow process.

What's the longest amount of time it's taken you to receive a job offer?

Your Job Search Homework: How to Research a Company Before the Interview

Apr 30, 2014 06:00AM



Nothing says, “You’re not the right candidate for this job” than having no clue what the company actually does. And trust us — “the dog ate your interview notes” won’t fly!

Before you go on your next job interview, be sure to go through our handy homework checklist so you can show your interviewers that you’re ready to impress...

Check out the company website.

While there may be massive amounts of information to go through, all you really need to do is follow this cheat sheet:

- About Us - This will provide a quick overview of what the company's mission is and where it is headed.
- Company History - It's always smart to know how a company has evolved and changed since its inception.
- Newsroom/Media Room - Find out if there have been any major company announcements recently, from a new CEO to a product launch to a new round of venture capital.

Check out employee reviews.

While others' opinions might not always be on par with yours (just think of Amazon's product reviews), reading what former and current employees have to say about a company can give some insight into its culture and policies. Keep in mind that the word of one burned employee shouldn't outweigh dozens of glowing reviews, however, be wary if you begin to see any patterns.

Google them to see who's talking about them, and what they're saying.

Especially for large corporations, media coverage is a good way to gauge a company's impact on its industry, and sometimes, get an unbiased look at what it's achieved or mistakes it's made. There might also be employer reviews on third party sites, such as the ones you'll find here on FTRJ. One more hint: Set up a Google alert with the company's name so that you can stay on top of any new news.

Read the LinkedIn profiles of the people you'll be meeting, as well as the executive team.

Company research should go deeper than just learning about the company itself. Take a look at the backgrounds and profiles of the people you'll potentially be meeting and/or working with. You might just discover that you went to the same college or have a former company or connections in common, which can be a perfect way to break the ice. Beyond LinkedIn, you can follow them on Twitter and/or Google+ as well.

Go straight to the source.

If you are lucky enough to know someone who currently works for the company (or did at one time), pick his or her brain. Ask about the company's culture, what they might be looking for in a new hire, and/or any other insider information that could be helpful.

By going into the interview room with a strong knowledge of the company and the

people interviewing you, you can anticipate the types of questions they might throw at you, as well as ask intelligent questions of your own. Better still, you'll be more confident, and sometimes, that alone can set you apart from other job seekers.

Study Shows U.S. Adults Need Skills Boost

Mar 5, 2014 06:00AM



If you're having trouble finding a good job, it could be because your skills don't match the needs of today's employers. And you're certainly not alone in your unemployment (or underemployment) – even those who completed high school and some college may find themselves woefully unprepared for the workforce.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Survey of Adult Skills, which measured the skills of 16- to 65-year-olds across 24 countries, American adults are lagging behind many of their global peers in reading, math, and problem-solving skills.

For example, the study found that 28.7 percent of adults in the United States perform at or below the most basic level of math, compared to just 8.2 percent of adults in Japan. And when it comes to reading and math skills, young Americans rank the lowest among their peers in all the countries surveyed. In fact, low reading and math skills are more common in the United States than on average across countries.

How to Boost Your Skills

While it's too late to go back to elementary school and lay a better foundation for

your education, there are steps you can take now to gain the skills you need to secure a solid career. It starts with **enrolling in an adult education program**, and making sure that particular program will help you get where you want to go.

Take a look at three non-negotiable components of an adult education program:

1. Goal-oriented curriculum

The American Council on Education (ACE), which recently released a report based on the OECD study, recommends that colleges align academic content with occupational goals. What does that mean for you, the adult student? Basically, you need to be an educated consumer. Look for training programs that partner with local businesses and tailor their curriculum to match employers' needs. When that happens, the "required skills" section on industry job postings should look similar to the intended outcomes for your academic program.

2. Flexibility

ACE has long championed flexible education scheduling and delivery options to boost accessibility for all learners. Flexibility is especially important for adult learners who are balancing academics with work and family responsibilities. An online training course, for example, might be much more doable for you than a course that requires you to commute. Or maybe weekend classes would be just the thing to help you polish up your skills. Look for a program that was designed with working adults in mind.

3. Stackable credentials

Most adults don't have the opportunity to complete a certificate or degree program full time, all in one shot. You may be able to take a course or two, but then you need to stop while the kids are on break from school, or you need to travel for work, or a host of other reasons. That's why ACE recommends that colleges and universities offer "stackable" credentials. Enrolling in a stackable program allows you to earn meaningful credentials after a few classes, so you have something to show for your efforts at various steps along your education path.

If you want to improve your job prospects, you need a skills boost – and a well-designed adult education program can provide just the push you need.

Getting the Most Out of a Stepping Stone Job

Mar 4, 2014 06:00AM



It can be hard to be passionate about a “placeholder” job, the kind you take just because **you need a paycheck while you continue to pine for your dream job**. But with the right attitude and set of circumstances, you might eventually look back on that job as the launching pad for your career happiness.

“People who are in their first jobs or trying to transition have to realize that it’s a stepping stone to something better, and do their best even if it’s not the perfect fit for them,” says Vicky Oliver, career expert and author of *301 Smart Answers to Tough Interview Questions*.

Here are her strategies for making the most out of every job, even if it’s not your ideal one...

Figure Out Who the Players Are in the Company

Aligning yourself with movers and shakers, even if your job title doesn't warrant it, can be a great networking move. Don't just focus on people's titles either, says Oliver, who suggest watching carefully to see whose energy lights up the office.

"It's not a luck of the draw thing. Get yourself on the projects with the 'A players.' You will learn more, and they will have more need for you," she says. When you are ready to move on, these are the people who will give you glowing references, not to mention you could learn a thing or two from them. Or, you might just fall in love with the company and carve out a promotion for yourself.

Work on Fitting In Before Standing Out

When you first start out, the goal is to be perceived as part of the team, says Oliver. Until you really get to know the culture of the company, take some time to listen, learn, and play the part. Go to all meetings you're invited to, even if you're sacrificing your own productivity.

"Meetings are giving you face time with higher ups and really important people, so you can interact with a group," she explains.

Don't Act Entitled

Entitlement is the idea that a job or certain tasks are beneath you. While that could be true in some ways, you should never act like you're just a temp worker.

"There are some people who paid their dues who are going to despise that attitude," warns Oliver. You might have been a great student, for example, but no one will care about your GPA in the workplace.

Whether it serves as a temporary income stream, ends up connecting you with a mentor who will help guide your career, or gives you the chance to sharpen some skills, your stepping stone job isn't as bad as you think. Take from it what you can, and stay on the hunt for your next big break.

How to Handle an Employment Gap on Your Resume

Feb 24, 2014 06:00AM



“So how do you explain this large gap between jobs?”

Whether you’ve been a layoff victim or took some time away from the workplace to raise a child or go back to school, it can be tough to face this question on a job interview. The last thing you want to do is give the impression that you’ve been lounging around catching up on your Netflix queue and eating junk food.

We turned to Shawnice Meador, Director of Career Management & Leadership Development for MBA@UNC for her thoughts on how to handle an employment gap of six months or more. It turns out you might not be doomed after all!

FTRJ: Are companies more accepting of those who have been out of work for an extended period of time because of the tougher job market of the last few years?

SM: Employers recognize that with the recent economic downturn, there are many highly qualified people out of work through no fault of their own. Competition is high for jobs, since not only are unemployed people applying for jobs, but currently employed people are vying for the same positions as well. Due to this, employers understand that the job search process can be much longer than anticipated in some cases.

Employers want employees who are driven, smart and productive. Show them that you are these things, whether or not you are currently employed. If you have been out of work for an extended period of time, you can still successfully demonstrate all of these attributes through not only your previous work history, but also through your ability to tell your “story” well in an interview and relate it to your future potential.

FTRJ: What are some ways to show that you’ve been proactive and productive during your layoff?

SM: Staying “in touch” and productive while you are out of work will not only help you feel engaged, but can really make a difference to a future employer. Here are a handful of ways to keep your skills sharp while job searching:

Volunteer - There are many opportunities and avenues to volunteer your time and expertise, depending on your skill set and availability. If you have strong consulting skills, consider performing some pro bono project work for a local non-profit or small business. If you are a great facilitator, consider helping a local museum or elementary school with team building or business planning processes. If you thrive when you are interacting with people, consider volunteering as an usher at a local performing arts center or a sports arena.

Network - Many communities, alumni groups and professional associations hold formal periodic social and networking events. Look into them in your area and make the time to actively participate. Due to the current job market, there are also a number of job search-related networking groups you can join as well. Take advantage of not only the opportunity to hear great speakers, but also network with other colleagues who may be able to help you with leads.

Learn - This can be a great time to brush up on your technology skills, learn a new language, or enroll in continuing education classes or even a reputable degree program like MBA@UNC. The job search process can be frustrating and monotonous at times, so keeping your mind stimulated with new and insightful

knowledge should help keep you focused and invigorated.

In addition to staying on top of your game, you never know what sort of relationships and/or impressions will grow from these experiences that may ultimately lead to your next job.

FTRJ: Can you share some strategies for marketing yourself beyond just uploading your resume to a job board?

SM: I don't recommend a traditional job posting-based approach as your sole job search strategy, where you endlessly search external job boards for relevant postings, fill out large numbers of applications, and anxiously wait to hear back.

Between 4 and 10 percent of job seekers are discovered off a job posting board, whereas between 75 and 85 percent of people get their name into the mix through a relationship or by networking. Also, since company culture fit is so important, pursuing an employer-based job search instead of a job posting-based job search is recommended. [Check out our employer profiles here to get your research started!] Here are three important steps:

1. The first step in an employer-based job search involves determining which employers are located in the geographic location you are targeting, and narrowing down which ones have the best opportunity for longer term career progression, company cultures that appeal to you, and employers have types of roles that you will be interested in.
2. Once you have narrowed down your list to a "top 10," then determine who you know at each company that may become an advocate for you in your job search process. These could be friends or family, former co-workers, or alumni.
3. Lastly, you need to create a calendar-based action plan to reach out to your contacts. Ideally, reach out to one person from each company at a time, not multiple people all at one company. This will allow you to pursue multiple options simultaneously, while not making it look like you are "fishing" at any one employer.

FTFJ: I'd love to hear more about personal brand. How can you position yourself as the person that's perfect for XYZ company?

SM: A strong personal brand sends an immediate and memorable message to

someone about who you are, what skills you bring to the table, and how you would perform at a company. People like Oprah, Bill Gates, and Michael Jordan have built incredibly successful personal brands. Even if you don't have plans of becoming a talk show host, CEO, or sports superstar, your brand is incredibly important to develop and manage as well.

It is important that you create and maintain a personal brand that is consistent through all outlets, including your resume, social media, professional networks, and even non-business realms.

The resume in particular has undergone a significant shift over the past few years. These days the resume is much more about personal branding and spoon-feeding the hiring manager information that differentiates you from other candidates, rather than a laundry list of every past job responsibility.

It's important to highlight your personal brand at the top of the resume. The information listed first is the deciding factor in whether they like what they see, and wish to continue reading. After your contact information, create a few bullets or short sentences that provide critical information you want a hiring manager to know about you. Each bullet or sentence should be concise, exemplify your personal brand, and differentiate you from the next person. Collectively, this top area should showcase your skills, experiences and leadership abilities to entice a hiring manager, and it should also give a general idea of what it would be like to work with you.

FTRJ: What should people know about social media when it comes to job searching?

Just as social media plays a huge part in your daily life, it is also an imperative in your job search efforts. Representing yourself professionally online not only helps you protect your image, but also supports your overall personal brand. While creating and maintaining your personal brand in your job search, make sure you extend this to who you are on LinkedIn – the largest professional networking site worldwide – as well as Facebook, Twitter, personal websites, and blogs.

FTRJ: Anything else that long-time job seekers should know as far as job searching strategies, networking, etc.?

Always keep in mind that landing a great job takes time. Organize your job search with an action plan to stay focused and motivated. Map out specific tasks, like

company research, reaching out to alumni, and setting up informational interviews.

It's also a good strategy to make networking a bigger part of your job search strategy. Networking helps a person grow their contacts and increases their probability of landing an interview. Reach out to a former colleague, neighbor, or classmate. You never know who can help get your foot in the door, or who they may know who can. Although an interview is not guaranteed, networking is the most effective way to get your name out there; it will benefit your job search - and your career.

Also, look at each step as an opportunity to increase your probability of landing a job. Each LinkedIn request accepted, every career fair you attend, and every informational meeting you have increases the chances of your name coming up in conversations for job vacancies. Don't get ahead of yourself; recognize that you need to get your foot in the door before you get an interview and an offer.

For many employers, the creative resume tactic is getting old. Many applicants don't tailor their ideas to the company (such as the chocolate bar wrapper), and others don't follow their applications with professionalism during the interview process. And some companies, including online craft marketplace Etsy, have seen it all, WSJ reports.

Etsy's senior recruiting manager Bobby Gormsen says applicants have sent an embroidered cover letter, a potholder resume, a paper-garland resume, and an application that bobbed in a corked bottle.

"I'm sort of immune to this stuff," he says. The candidates "get points for creativity, but it only tells one side of the story. We have a set of hard skills an applicant has to meet," including experience and software knowledge.

In addition, Alison Green, who writes the Ask a Manager blog, offered a few "don'ts" when it comes to creating and delivering resumes:

"Don't drop off your resume in person. Sure, everyone has heard a story about someone who went by to drop off their resume in person and got interviewed and hired on the spot. But most employers will find it annoying and indicative that you don't understand modern hiring conventions. After all, most companies include specific instructions about how they want you to apply, and 'in person' is rarely included. Plus, many companies only accept resumes electronically because they get put into an electronic screening system. (Retail and food service tend to be the exceptions to this rule.)"

This includes overnighting your application, Green says. It looks overbearing and aggressive. Similarly, it's unprofessional to include your photo, she posts on U.S. News.

"Although photos often accompany resumes in other countries, in the United States it's considered naïve and even gauche to include a photo with your application. Not only does a photo come across as inappropriate, but it will make many employers uncomfortable, because it opens the door for allegations of discrimination."

But sometimes the gimmicks can work, points out this Business Insider post that details several outlandish resume tricks that helped. One applicant created a

LEGO model of the company's mascot to hold her resume. If you understand the company's brand and culture, it just might work — but plan wisely.

Read more about job hunting gimmicks now.

Unconventional Job Interviews: Are You Ready?

Feb 3, 2014 06:00AM



Interviews are conducted today in a variety of settings, so as a job seeker it's important for you to be prepared and do your best to impress employers.

Keep yourself from being caught off guard by checking out these unconventional job interviews and being ready in all situations.

Surprise Interviews

Surprise! A potential employer hasn't contacted you to set up an interview, and then all of a sudden, the person in charge of hiring or even the owner of the company is calling. They need to ask you a few questions right now about your experience, abilities, and interest in the job. What do you do?

There's pressure to answer the questions, or risk having them contact another applicant. If you have time to take a break from what you're doing and are alert, go ahead and talk to them. But if you're in a class, at your current job, or in a noisy setting, simply tell them you are unavailable and ask if you can call them back in a certain amount of time (such as 10 minutes if you need to get to a quieter place, or during your work break). Even if you feel you need a couple of minutes to gather yourself, you can ask them if you can call them right back.

Video Interviews

Interviews using Skype, videoconferencing, FaceTime, or other programs are a way for employers to meet you for the first time or to move you along the interview process, without paying to bring you to their offices. When interviewing remotely, you still need to look your best (with professional dress) and take the same steps to learn about the company that you would for an in-person interview. Also, do everything on your end to avoid tech glitches and to feel relaxed.

Make sure you have everything you need to properly maintain the tech connection. Do a test run with friends or family to ensure that there will be no technical glitches and to get a sense of whether or not you need to smile more or if they catch you being distracted by a text or email during the interview.

Group Interviews

Group interviews can be either awkward or incredible. By lumping a number of candidates together, group interviews offer a way to employers to meet multiple applicants at once, especially if more than one position is available. Know this, though: You're going to need to stand out without monopolizing the conversation. You'll also need to show potential employers how you can be part of a team.

For example, you may be assigned to complete a task with the other candidates (similar to "The Apprentice" TV show, but hopefully without all of the drama). Recognize that employers will be interested in seeing your leadership abilities and your interpersonal communication skills.

Airport Interviews

Yes, a job interview can happen at an airport coffee shop, restaurant, bar, or hotel. You may be asked to meet a potential employer at your local airport, if he or she has a layover or needs to quickly fly into your town and then fly right out. Sometimes this allows this to interview several candidates quickly. Or sometimes the company wants to be hush-hush about candidates and doesn't want to bring people into the office yet. In other cases, the company may have you fly to a city to meet an official in charge of hiring, but because of your schedule or their schedule, you don't even leave the airport property.

Now that you know about these unconventional job interviews, you'll feel more comfortable no matter how you are meeting your potential next employer or new

boss.

What's the oddest interview you've ever had?

6 Surprising Things Slowing Down Your Job Search

Jan 29, 2014 06:00AM



Clearly, channel surfing and Facebook stalking are going to slow down your job search. So will sleeping all day, eating nonstop, and shopping till you drop. But that fact's a no-brainer. If you want to kick your job hunt into high gear, take a look at a few things you might *not* have known were slowing you down.

Diving in headfirst

You want to get this job search party started, but if you go in half-cocked you'll waste valuable time conducting an unfocused search. Don't just randomly apply for every job opening you see. Instead, spend time evaluating your strengths, weaknesses, skills, and interests at the outset so that you'll be in a better position to uncover the job opportunities for which you're best suited.

Sticking with one strategy

Don't rely solely on online job boards, LinkedIn groups, or your college alumni office - engage *all* of these platforms. Head down to your local employment office and community college, and even call a few nonprofits that are not actively hiring to see if they can use your skills. Tell everyone you know, in person and via social media, that you're looking for a job. Leave no stone unturned.

Selfishness

You need a job, but recruiters are not interested in your needs. Their job is to meet the needs of their company. So your goal is to demonstrate how you can meet the *company's* needs. "Be an aspirin," said Susanne Goldstein, career development consultant and author of *Carry a Paintbrush: How to Be the Artistic Director of Your Own Career*. "Learn about the company, find out what the company's pain is, and show them how your skills can be solution to that pain."

A safety net

Are you really all in for your job hunt, or have you gotten comfortable cashing in on unemployment? The downside of unemployment benefits is the psychological safety net it offers, rendering your job search efforts less serious and intense. Consider this: if the money were to run out tomorrow, would you step up your game? If the answer is yes, don't wait till your benefits run out – go all in now.

A bad attitude

If you feel like your job search is taking forever, it's possible that you've started to lose heart and are becoming bitter about your prospects. You might think you can put on a good face for interviews, but if you're cultivating a negative, cynical attitude, recruiters can see right through you. Ditch the chip on your shoulder and surround yourself with positive people to keep your head on straight and your smile genuine.

Holding out for the "perfect" job

Do you feel like you should hold out for job you really want, the one you think you deserve? Are you worried that taking a lower-level job will short-circuit your career? Actually, prolonged unemployment could do even more damage to your career. Roberta Chinsky Matuson, president of Human Resources Solutions and author of *Suddenly in Charge*, put it best: "Who cares what color your parachute is? Take the right-now job, excel at it, and keep networking until you find the dream job."

5 Rookie First Job Mistakes Recent Grads Make

Mar 6, 2014 06:00AM



Most people would relish the opportunity go back in time and correct mistakes, especially in the workplace.... The foot-in-the-mouth comment that causes major embarrassment in front of your boss. The bad attitude that creates a divide between yours and co-workers. The unprofessional outfit (or series of outfits) that shows your inexperience in a workplace.

Some rookie mistakes can be prevented, though, to enhance your work experience, even if you're not thrilled with the job you're in now. By taking a look at these five missteps identified by career coach and author Vicky Oliver, you could keep from damaging your reputation and can take steps to move up in your career.

1. Being too passive and mousy.

Even in your first job out of college, you have to find your voice and speak up, whether you have questions or great ideas. As Oliver notes: "You're in the real world now and, frankly, it feels intimidating. Everyone seems to know more than you do." She recommends asking questions, noting that your boss and co-workers will expect them, and you will show that you want to learn and are curious. But

consider the timing of your question: “Just don’t ask to be trained during high-stress peak periods. Try to wait until the crisis has passed.”

2. Having a bad attitude.

So maybe the job you’re in right now is not your dream job, or you may be overqualified. Or maybe you’re just bored, as I heard one college student recently complaining that she doesn’t do anything in her job. Don’t let everyone at work know you are unhappy, but focus on performing well, learning what you can from this position and making sure you leave the job with a positive referral (not with bosses and co-workers thinking, “Good riddance.”)

Even if you consider this a temporary gig, Oliver recommends learning about the company’s marketing and advertising, customer satisfaction metrics, employee retention, and other business areas. Ask if you can take on additional tasks that will make your work more engaging and challenging.

3. Using poor (or no) etiquette.

You may love that your workplace is casual and relaxed, but don’t use that as a reason to bring in bad behavior or push the dress code to new boundaries (leave the super tight shorts and see-through outfits at home). Oliver, author of books including, “301 Smart Answers to Tough Business Etiquette Questions,” says you still need to be polite, using words such as “Please” and “Thank You” and don’t interrupt others.

4. Trying too hard to be liked.

Find your balance between being social and being too social. You’re going out with co-workers, bringing snacks, and are getting the reputation as the jokester. But if you’re just getting started in your career, that may be the wrong type of persona to have. Oliver says: “It’s great to be popular, but it’s just as important to be respected at the office. Especially at a new job, oversocializing and too much people pleasing at the expense of delivering good strong performance results can really backfire ... It’s better to pay your dues and work really hard at the beginning.”

5. Ignoring the people at your workplace.

On the other hand, you need to be informed about everyone on the team – from co-workers to management. Why? Because that’s how you can get noticed – and move up in your career – and show an interest in those around you. Oliver

recommends knowing the names of senior executives and being on a first-name basis with those who work under them as well as those who work on your floor. This may be unlike how you got through college, sitting in classes without learning the names of classmates. Oliver says: "Find out who runs each department, and learn the names and titles of everyone at the workplace. As a new employee, this will save you potential embarrassment when discussing work-related issues with both your higher-ups and colleagues. Learn who the 'go-to' person is on each team."

Leave Your Address Off Your Resume?

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Traditional job-seeker wisdom suggests that the top line of your resume be populated with your name and contact information – including, of course, your mailing address. Recently, though, career and resume experts have been recommending that job seekers omit this piece of data.

The main reason to leave your address off your resume is that employers won't look at where you live and reject your application outright because they've deemed your commute too long. You'd be surprised how often this happens! And between two comparable candidates, the one who lives closest might edge out the other because a shorter commute typically makes a more satisfied employee. Employers want happy, productive workers. They don't want to waste time and money training someone new when you decide to quit and get a job closer to home.

The fact is, many employers do take proximity into consideration. They might think there's a greater chance of your being late to work if you have a longer commute, making you a less reliable employee. And if the job is one where you're required to be on call, a candidate with a 10-minute commute will be much more attractive than one with a 30-minute commute. When you leave your address off

your resume, you're basically putting the decision of how long of a commute you can handle into your *own* hands, and out of the hands of recruiters.

Of course, as with anything new, there are legitimate concerns about this practice:

How will employers have any idea where I'm located?

In your work experience section, list your current and former employers and their city and state. That way, recruiters know where you've been most recently, but they can't discriminate against you because of how far you live from the office.

Won't it look suspicious if I don't list my address?

Not necessarily. Identity theft is a common concern these days, so most employers won't raise an eyebrow if you only provide your email address, cell phone, and LinkedIn URL. Keeping your home address private can also be a safety concern – do you really want strangers to know exactly where you live?

Won't an employer just ask me where I live in the interview?

Your location may very well come up in your job interview, but at least you *got* an interview instead of being screened out. In the interview, you have a chance to explain how you will handle the commute and how you've thought through the potential pitfalls.

Isn't this dishonest?

Honestly, no. You're not lying about where you live, you're just not serving up the information on a platter. Recruiters typically contact you via email or phone anyway – there's no need for them to have your home address at the job-seeking stage of the game.

Bottom line: Some employers won't want to hire you if they think you live too far away. If your address isn't working in your favor, leave it out.
