



LaunchToLead

LAUNCH PATH • Free Starter Kit

Stop Applying Into the Void

The Exact Roadmap I Used to Land My First Role at John Deere

You have the degree, you have the GPA, but you can't get the offer. Why? You just need the right strategy. This is mine.



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THE PROBLEM

Your Resume is Getting Trashed

The Hard Truth

Your resume will find its way into the trash can if it doesn't capture a recruiter or hiring manager's attention quickly. Most recruiters have seen so many resumes that within **20 seconds of skimming**, they can tell if it deserves more time or not.

Obvious errors or blunders can get your resume passed on in 20 seconds or less.

The Most Common Mistake

Most people have a resume full of "job description" type bullets. This is extremely common — and it impresses no one.

Listing your "duties," "responsibilities," or "tasks" is not going to wow anyone. It shows either you didn't put in the effort to write actual accomplishments, or you don't have any accomplishments to list. Either way, it's bad news for your chances.

The Solution:

I completely overhauled my resume, restructured my interview prep, and used a secret weapon in my final round. Here's exactly what I did to land an offer at John Deere.

Overhaul Your Resume

Transform job descriptions into accomplishments

The Bullet Point Formula

I crafted every single bullet point in this format:

What
The accomplishment

How
How you did it

Metric
Proof it worked

Impact
Why it mattered

Notice: I'm using the word **accomplishment**. Not a single "job description like activity" or "role responsibility" made it onto my resume. Each bullet was something I thought was worthy of bragging about — something to brag to any potential employer about, not some checkbox I checked as part of my job description.

My Unique Challenge

My only professional engineering experience came from 1 year at the Iowa Department of Transportation as a Highway Design Engineer — and I was applying as a Mechanical Engineer to John Deere. I needed bullets that were honest, reflective of what I actually did, but relevant to a mechanical engineering role at an ag industry leader. I had to learn to focus on **competencies** rather than technical specifics.

Know Your Audience

I didn't want a mechanical engineer to see my resume and not easily understand my bullet points. If someone can't understand what you did, how will they know if it's impressive? My job was to make it as easy as possible for a recruiter or hiring manager to be impressed by my accomplishments.

STEP ONE (CONTINUED)

Tailor It to the Job Posting

One resume does not fit all applications

Relevance Over Recency

I restructured my resume from top to bottom, with **most relevant experiences on top** and least relevant on bottom. This doesn't necessarily mean "most recent" — think **relevance**.

Some things on your resume might be relevant for one application but not another. I made sure my experiences and bullets were crafted to be relevant to the specific role I was applying for at Deere.

Match the Job Posting

When I found the job posting I wanted, I tweaked my resume even further to match it. Keep in mind, this was before ChatGPT existed — this was all done by hand:

- Each bullet adjusted to match "job duties/responsibilities"
- Each work experience aligned with "must haves"
- Different elements highlighted to match "nice to haves"

I left nothing on the table that I couldn't apply to this job posting specifically.

Then I Applied

With a resume that was completely overhauled, structured by relevance, and tailored to the exact job posting, my application went off. The first step was a phone screen.

STEP TWO

Nail the Phone Screen

Show genuine enthusiasm — don't sound desperate

What to Expect

The phone screen was a short call — maybe 20–30 minutes. These were mostly general job fit questions:

- How much experience do you have?
- What was your experience like?
- What are you interested in?
- What was your favorite class/project in school?
- Are you open to relocation?

Don't Sound Desperate

You really don't want to come off as someone "just looking for any job" with "any company." This screams: "*Please, God, just hire me, I need a job, please!!*"

What I Did Instead

I made extra sure to relay that I was interested in **Deere as a company** — their products, their technology, what they did, and where I thought they were headed.

I did research online and through people in my network who worked at Deere or had done research related to Deere work at ISU. I showed real enthusiasm and excitement to work for this specific company.

Prepare Your Examples

This is where most people fall flat on their face

The Biggest Interview Mistake

Most people don't spend enough time digging up the details of all their examples. They either don't prepare enough examples, or they don't go deep enough on the ones they have.

Build Your Example Matrix

I went through every single work experience I wanted to use and made a matrix with columns for:

Situation & Task

Context and what you were asked to do

Actions

What YOU specifically did

Results

Measurable outcomes and impact

I thought of every single example that was some kind of accomplishment or something worth bragging about. This list is bigger than what's on your resume, but it also includes many of the things on your resume.

Pro Tip: Document As You Go

One of the best things you can do is keep track of this information periodically — month to month, week to week, year to year. But most people don't do this, so when they start preparing for an interview, they have to start combing through the Rolodex in their mind to pull out all these nuggets.

STEP THREE (CONTINUED)

Rate Your Examples: 1 to 5 Stars

Not all examples are created equal

★★★★☆ 1-Star

This person is horrible. Shocking they can put their pants on by themselves.

★★★★☆ 2-Star

Answer wasn't good. Didn't really answer the question, wasn't impressive, had communication issues, example was hard to follow, hard to understand the impact. Subpar and unacceptable.

★★★★☆ 3-Star

Sufficient. You won't be disqualified, but nothing impressive. Checks the box — minimum answer needed, minimum competency demonstrated. Nothing to write home about.

★★★★★ 4-Star

Impresses interviewers. Demonstrated the competency clearly, communicated well, showed situation/task/actions/results extremely clearly, went a bit above and beyond.

★★★★★ 5-Star

You're a rock star. Demonstrated competency, communicated perfectly, went above and beyond, and had a bigger impact than the original scope — maybe you improved a process, trained others, transferred learnings elsewhere, presented to a bigger audience.

My Target: 15 Examples (10 five-star, 5 four-star)

For a 1-hour interview with 5-7 questions, I aimed for ~15 examples. I picked all my 5-star examples first, then filled the remaining slots with my top 4-star examples. Never use 1-3 star examples — and never invent content.

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STEP FOUR

Practice Until It's Automatic

Most people don't do nearly enough of this

The Biggest Practice Mistake

Most people don't start practicing until a couple days or even the day before. This is **not enough time** to let your examples sink into your head and become embedded in your memory.

My Practice Routine

I went through all 15 examples **over and over and over**:



Before Work



Lunch Break



After Work

7 days a week until all the details became ingrained in my memory **like my own last name**.

The Power of Deep Memorization

Once your examples are memorized to this level of detail, you have an ocean of content that can be molded, twisted, and shaped to fit **any question** an interviewer asks. You're only going to get 5–7 questions testing 5–7 competencies — there's no way they can ask you something your 15 deeply-detailed examples can't address from some angle.

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STEP FIVE

Do Mock Interviews

1–2 full mock interviews every day for a week

Why Most People Skip This

- ✗ They don't have people in their network willing to give their time
- ✗ The people available don't have the knowledge to give good feedback
- ✗ They think they're better at interviewing than they actually are

My Mock Interview Schedule

After my first week of preparing examples, I spent the next week doing mock interviews: **1–2 full hour-long mock interviews every single day.**

I practiced with former college friends, current colleagues, people in my network, other professionals, and family members.

Even Non-Experts Help

If you can't get knowledgeable people, get *anybody*. Sitting across from someone — even if they're not technical — gives you realism you can't get practicing alone. They can still give valuable feedback about:

- How clearly you spoke and your pace
- How confusing or easy to follow your examples were
- Whether you're using jargon that outsiders don't understand

The Interview Day

95–99% of your success is what you did before you got there

Think of It Like the Olympics

Some Olympians only get 30 seconds to 5 minutes to perform — but they've spent **4 years** training. That's how you should think of an interview. The performance is the tip of the iceberg; the preparation is everything underneath.

Practice Until the Last Minute

I flew out to Pittsburgh for the conference. Here's when I practiced:

 On the flight

 In the Uber to hotel

 In the hotel

 In the Uber to venue

 Waiting outside the door

During the Interview: Get Comfortable with Silence

- It's OK to ask for 1–2 minutes to think about a question
- It's OK to ask for clarification or what angle they want
- It's OK to ask to come back to a question at the end
- Ask about their backgrounds so you can adjust your terminology

These "stalling" tactics actually show **maturity** — the kind colleagues want to see in someone they'll work with.

THE SECRET WEAPON

The Visual Aid Binder

The icing on the cake that separated me from everyone else

What I Brought to Round 2

When I got word I had a second round interview at Deere's headquarters in Moline, I prepared a **visual aid binder** — a mentor of mine taught me this technique. For each of my 15 examples, I gathered:

- Charts and diagrams
- Visual descriptions of projects
- Design examples
- Results and impact visualized

Each section had a tab with a label for every interview example.

The Reaction in the Room

When I pulled out my binder in the waiting room, I heard murmurs: *"Dang, that's a really good idea. I wish I would have thought of that."* Nobody else in my round of interviews had brought a visual aid.

How I Used It

I handed the binder to interviewers at the beginning. When they asked a question, I'd say: *"This reminds me of when I worked on Project X – if you turn to the tab labeled X..."*

As I described the project, they could flip through and see what I was talking about. It bridged the gap between my civil/construction background and the mechanical engineering role I was applying for. **A picture is worth a thousand words.**

THE RESULT

Within a Couple Weeks, I Got the Offer

What Made the Difference (Recap)

- 1 Resume that showed impact, not responsibilities**
Every bullet was an accomplishment with metrics, tailored to the specific job posting
- 2 15 deeply-detailed examples in a STAR matrix**
Rated for quality, focused on 4–5 star examples only
- 3 Examples memorized like my own name**
Practiced morning, noon, and night for weeks
- 4 1–2 mock interviews per day for a full week**
Built sheer confidence and polished delivery
- 5 Visual aid binder for the final round**
Differentiated me from every other candidate

One Final Note: The Human Element

People don't want to hire someone they don't want to work with. You can't just answer questions and check boxes — there's a human element. Conduct yourself professionally, as if you're going to be these people's colleague. Show them that working with you will be enjoyable. At the end of the day, they know they'll have to work with you day after day.

YOUR ACTION PLAN

Quick Reference Checklist

Do these things before your next application

Resume Checklist

- Every bullet is an accomplishment, not a responsibility
- Each bullet has: What + How + Metric + Impact
- Ordered by relevance, not just recency
- Tailored specifically to this job posting
- Easy to understand for someone outside your domain

Interview Prep Checklist

- Built STAR matrix with all possible examples
- Rated examples 1–5 stars, kept only 4–5 stars
- Have ~15 examples ready (10 five-star, 5 four-star)
- Practiced examples until memorized like my name
- Did 1–2 mock interviews daily for a full week

Interview Day Checklist

- Researched the company, products, and direction
- Prepared visual aid binder (for final rounds)
- Practiced right up until walking in the door
- Ask interviewers about their backgrounds
- Comfortable asking for time or clarification
- Show genuine enthusiasm for this specific company

Ready to Stop Applying Into the Void?

This playbook is just the beginning. Check out our Launch Path packages at LaunchToLead.io for personalized coaching to land your first engineering role.

[Book a Free Discovery Call →](#)

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