

10 Reasons Your Job Search is Failing

By CareerBuilder.com writer

On paper, the prescription for unemployment is rather formulaic: send in résumé, go on interview, be your charming self, get hired.

The frustrating reality isn't nearly as simple. Getting an interview alone is an exercise in persistence and patience.

Here are 10 reasons for why you're not landing that interview and what you can do to reverse the trend.

Your résumé and cover letter are as articulate as Courtney Love's Web blog. If your application materials contain typos, grammatical errors and irrelevant or inconsistent information, employers will take notice -- in a bad way. Once you've looked over your résumé and cover letter to the point of dementia, take this advice from Joyce Gioia of the Herman Group: have three people, for whom English is a first language, review your résumé and cover letter before you send it.

Your cover letter is generic. Make it personal by tailoring it to the particular job and addressing it to a person, not "To Whom It May Concern." And include a sentence or two about how you are the right fit for that particular job. If no contact is listed, take the initiative to find out who the hiring manager is by searching the company's Web site or calling the reference desk.

Your letter is a CliffsNotes version of your résumé. Instead of simply restating what's on your résumé, include new information like how you found out about the job, why you want to work there and what you can do for them. Finally, close with something that will encourage a response, such as a request for an interview.

Your letter exudes self-consciousness, not self-confidence. If you don't feel qualified for a job, why are you applying for it? Don't call attention to your shortcomings in a letter; emphasize your strengths by focusing on your skills, experience and ability.

You cross the line from sounding confident to sounding cocky. Don't mistake selling yourself with bragging. Putting "I would be an asset to your company" in your cover letter catches the eye; writing "You would be crazy not to hire me" turns the stomach.

Your MySpace page lists "binge-drinking" as a favorite pastime. Don't post anything on a publicly accessible Web site that you wouldn't want a potential employer to see. Not all hiring managers run searches on job candidates, but some do, and it's better to err on the side of caution. Google yourself to see what comes up, because recruiters will see the same results.

You assume e-mail is enough. Hitting the send button on an online application is only the first step in landing an interview. For one thing, not every e-mail is received or read. Try following up your application by sending a paper résumé and cover letter via snail mail (indicating you've already applied online). After that, call the hiring manager to see that they've received your application and check on the status of the job in question.

You assume the Internet is enough. The majority of all employment opportunities aren't advertised, so be proactive: Contact human resources managers at companies you want to work for inquiring about positions available; register with a job recruitment agency; attend industry events to stay on top of news; and devote energy to meeting like-minded professionals who will be the keys to discovering more opportunities.

You misrepresent yourself. It may sound like a no-brainer, but misrepresenting yourself on a résumé is bound to catch up with you. Upon performing a reference check, Denise Moorehead, communications director of a non-profit service agency in Boston, once discovered a job candidate had left her previous job a year earlier than she'd admitted. It turned out that the candidate had gotten burned out and decided to take a year to temp and regroup, but thought the obvious employment gap would be held against her, so she simply lied about it. "I figured if she'd lie about something this easy to explain, she might lie about the deadline-driven work she would have to do with me," Moorehead says.

You give up. Remember that looking for a job is a full-time job. If you're not hearing back from employers, considering changing your strategy. Experiment with different cover letters, revise your résumé on a regular basis and look for opportunities to add to your experience even when you're not working (i.e. taking classes, participating in workshops, volunteering).

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