

# 5 things employers wish they could say about your resume

Your resume plays a vital role in helping you get a job. You prepare it as best you can, and you might get the opinion of a trusted friend or family member to see if it's up to scratch.

But what will the employers you're sending it to think? What do they care about most in a resume, and what are the potential problems that might put them off?

Employers, hiring managers and recruiters typically know just what they're looking for in a resume. Equally, there are things they identify that can make a resume less appealing than others.

Here are the five key things they wish they could say about your resume.

## 1. **Don't ignore gaps in your work history**

You may have taken time off work to travel, have a family or any number of other reasons. A break isn't something to be ashamed of, but leaving large periods of time unexplained can leave employers and recruiters wondering what you were up to. Employers also know you could have been out of work for reasons out of your control, says Andrew Brushfield, director at Robert Half. These include things like company downsizing or restructuring.

But employers still like you to be transparent about breaks and what you did to remain professionally active and engaged in your time away from work. Brushfield says as well as listing your previous jobs in your work history, include any freelance work or volunteering activities you've done. "List them along with your previous positions, and include as much relevant information as you can, such as the dates, location and a short description of the work involved," he says. It's also worth including non-work-related activities on your resume if they helped you gain professional skills, as well as any courses or classes you undertook while you weren't working.

Think about any questions a potential employer may have about your gaps in your work history, and how you can address these questions. "Be proactive and explain them in your cover letter in a clear and concise manner," Brushfield says. "Try not to sound defensive or apologetic – just address your gap in employment and mention what you did to remain active during the time."

## 2. **Keep it short**

It might seem like more information is better when you want to impress. But a resume is there to help you stand out and catch an employer's attention – which is a lot harder if it's cluttered or several pages long.

Making it easy for an employer to see your most relevant skills, experience and achievements at a glance means a lot [in a crowded job market](#). A concise two-page resume is going to do this better than a long-winded four-page resume.

Think of your resume like a summary of the highlights rather than a document of your whole career history. Once you've written it, look for areas you can trim or refine so the best details can shine through. Often, it's best to cover your most recent roles with more detail, and keep the rest of your work history to the key details of position titles, dates plus a few key tasks and achievements.

Not sure where to begin? [This free resume template](#) can get you started.

### 3. **Pay attention to the details**

The content of your resume is most important, but the finer details of the way you present yourself matter, too. You might want to stand out by using a bold design, but it's often best to stick with black and white, or if you're applying for a role in a creative industry, use one colour sparingly. Make sure the fonts are clear and easy to read.

Brushfield says your resume is your first impression, so it's important to make it a professional one. "Resumes with an over-the-top layout may seem creative, however, depending on the job you are applying for, hiring managers might see this as unprofessional," he says. Clear, well-structured resumes will do a better job of grabbing a hiring manager's attention, he adds. "Remember, employers reviewing your resume don't spend hours reading it, so it's best to make it as clear and succinct as possible."

"One big unprofessional giveaway is an amateur email address; while hotfuzz86@hotmail.com might have sounded good in university, it does distract and comes across as unprofessional in the business world. Consider a more generic email address such as firstname.lastname@gmail.com."

### 4. **Avoid buzzwords**

It's always important to tailor your resume to the job you're applying for, and it's a good idea to look for skills or attributes described in the job ad and highlight them in your resume where they're relevant. It's also good to show that you know the industry or type of work by using current terms.

But at the same time, you want to make sure the language in your resume is relatable and really means something. If your resume is full of [industry jargon and buzzwords](#) that don't mean all that much, you could be missing the chance to show your true value. Take a look at the terms you've used in your resume, and think about how you could back these up with examples or talk about them with an interviewer. If you can't, it's probably worth re-thinking them.

Kristine Tuazon, Principal Consultant at Good People HR says to customise each resume and cover letter to the industry or company you're applying to. "If you are dealing with a professional, traditional or conservative company, tailor your resume to this," she says. "If you are about to interview with an innovative start-up, design and present yourself in a way they will relate to and that will be relevant to them."

### **You don't need to include a photo**

In some parts of the world, it's standard to include a photo on your resume – but that's not really the case in New Zealand. Unless a job ad specifically requests that you include a photograph, don't add one to your resume. A profile photo doesn't demonstrate your skills, and a photo that's too casual could come across as unprofessional or send the wrong message.

It's natural to wonder what the employer who reads your resume is going to think of it. To some extent, it's hard to really know unless you end up discussing the details of your resume with them. But by taking on board these five points, you'll have a better idea of what to incorporate and what to avoid in your resume, so it's one that stands out to employers in the best possible way.

### **Read more:**

- [5 things employers wish they could say about your cover letter](#)
- [Free resume template](#)