

Myths busted: What employers really look for in your resume

Just how important are tailored resumes, squeaky clean social media profiles and comprehensive cover letters? We asked employers* to share – and you might be surprised at their answers.

When you're applying for a job, there's no shortage of advice about what you should and shouldn't do. SEEK research finds many strongly held beliefs about what potential employers are looking for isn't actually quite right.

So, let's bust five myths about what employers want from a resume.

Myth 1: It's creepy or weird to be creative with your resume

Most of us want to impress a potential employer, but that can mean we play it safe with our resumes. But did you know going out on a limb creatively can be a good thing in the eyes of employers?

Our research finds while most of us like to stick to tradition, more than half of employers say they love it when job seekers do something creative to catch their attention.

Making a video resume is a creative idea that appeals to some employers. Our research also finds calling to follow up on an application, or asking to speak to the manager when delivering your resume are other methods potential employers appreciate.

Truth: More than half of employers love it when job seekers do something creative to catch their attention.

Myth 2: It's essential to tailor your resume and cover letter

If there's anything that's been drummed into us when we're looking for work, it's that we absolutely must tailor our cover letter and resume to suit a particular role. While most of us think we have to do this (84%), the truth is only 51% of employers will skip past resumes if they haven't been tailored.

And perhaps surprisingly, only 34% of employers would skip past resumes that don't have a cover letter.

While cover letters aren't vital to all, career coach Leah Lambart from [Relaunch Me](#) does recommend them. "You can stand out in the recruitment process by writing a cover letter that shows some of your specific personality traits and interests rather than just writing a cover letter highlighting generic skills," she says.

Truth: Half of employers will still consider a resume if it hasn't been tailored and only 34% would skip a resume if it didn't have a cover letter.

Myth 3: The longer your resume, the better

You may have enough experience to fill four pages, but the majority of employers (77%) prefer short, one- to two-page resumes.

The key, Lambart says, is a brief resume with enough content for an employer to make a decision. "Highlight your transferable skills, a snapshot of your experience in a table format and then details for two or three of your most relevant positions," she says. "Ensure the content is achievement-focused rather than listing every responsibility and task you've ever completed."

Truth: Employers prefer short resumes (1-2 pages).

Myth 4: It doesn't matter what my resume looks like

Looks do matter when it comes to resumes – 89% of potential employers agree a [well-presented resume](#) is more likely to catch their attention.

“A well-presented and formatted resume is a must,” Lambart says. “It must be easy to read with plenty of white space between sections and have a consistent font throughout. The document needs to be easy to follow in regards to career history and key skills need to be easily identified.”

Truth: A well-presented resume is very important to employers.

Myth 5: Employers always look at your social media

While most of us (87%) think potential employers are viewing our social media accounts, the truth is only 57% actually are. So how deep do we need to go with [cleaning up our profiles?](#)

Lambart says it can be important to audit your social media posts for specific industries. “For some roles, such as sales, it is important to be well connected, so your online presence will be reviewed to see your connections and whether you are as social and outgoing as you say,” Lambart says.

Truth: Just over half of those involved in the recruitment process will look at your social media profiles.

It can be challenging to figure out what to include in your resume, and which parts to pay extra attention to. But by understanding what employers really want to see, you can put your best foot forward and increase your chances of landing your next role.

*NZ Source: Independent research conducted by Nature on behalf of SEEK.
Interviewing 4000 Kiwis annually*

**Employers are those who have had some level of responsibility in the hiring process as part of their role.*