

Job Hunting Over 40

By Becky Cole

Recently, I attended a training on strategies to get a job. The people in the room were clearly over 40 years old and had many years of work experience, but it felt like the instructors were talking to us as though we were looking for our first job right out of high school. I admit I found myself getting dizzy trying to follow what they were saying. For example,

“Don’t put dates of your work history because it will show you are older.” That left me wondering why that is different than saying “20 years of experience in this field.” Clearly, if you have 20 years of experience, you aren’t 18 years old.

“Put an objective at the top of your resume.” Yet, they couldn’t explain to me why that is useful when everyone who is applying for that job has the same objective – “to utilize my skills and learn new ones.”

Everyone also has opinions on font size, margins, paper and how you should separate your information.

The reality of it all is that each employer processes resume’s differently, so no matter how many times you stand on your head, there isn’t a single way to catch an employer’s attention.

So what do you do?

Know yourself

What is it that you do, can do and want to do? Why will an employer benefit from hiring you? If you are wavering on this, practice using, “I am good at” statements. For example, “I am good at developing interactive commercial websites.” “I am good at analyzing information to come up with appropriate solutions.”

Know the employer

Resist the urge to apply for a job just because someone posted an opening. Do your research on the company by going to their website and doing an internet search on the company to see what turns up.

Know the job

Read the job description and understand what they are looking for. Recently, I found three job postings for a “grant writer.” One was strictly to update and submit proposals to existing funders. Another included writing a monthly newsletter about funding sources. The third had relatively little that involved grant writing at all. Much of the emphasis on that job was public relations and marketing.

Customize your resume

Write your resume to the job description. Use the order of information they use in the job description. For example, if they talk about education first, list that on your resume first. Use their language. This is especially important if you are changing fields or moving to a different area in your field. If they ask for specific skills, list those at the top of your resume in a summary statement, and then make sure you list those skills when you talk about your work history.

Give results.

Tell them how your previous employer benefitted from having you around. If you were able to quickly adapt to learning new equipment, that meant lower training cost for the company. If you worked on an assembly line, your low error rate resulted in increased profit for the company.

Network

Job clubs and networking events are an essential tool in finding your next job. There are many available in the metro area, and are a great resource. Almost all are free, and those that do charge, the fee is typically minimal.

Recognize and embrace that your resume is a way to market yourself to your next employer.

Do you have a tool or a resource that would be useful for others to know about? Let me know.

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