

THE WORST (VERY COMMON) MISTAKES YOU'RE MAKING ON YOUR RESUME

by *Sangeeta Kocharekar* 27 March 2018

Up to ten thousand – that was the estimate a recruiter once gave me when I asked him how many CVs he'd seen throughout his career. It's an enormous amount, which validates his claim to have seen it all. Or, as he calls it, “the good, the bad, and the ugly”.

What exactly is the “ugly” in CV terms? To a handful of recruiters, I posed the question: what were the mistakes they considered to be the most cringe-worthy and careless? Here's what they said.

#1 Sharing irrelevant info

First up, including extra curricular activities on a CV – make sure everything on your resume is relevant to the job you're applying for. Even if that means editing it for each and every job. Mentioned by a few recruiters, this one wasn't a flat-out no-go – rather it was how you went about it that was potentially costing you interviews.

“Including hobbies and interests is fine if you have little or no work experience,” says Simon Bennett, a career coach at Glide Outplacement.

What you shouldn't be doing however is listing them for no reason. He says he's seen people write out “reading, movies, socialising, football” on CVs before.

“This tells the employer nothing about you, your level of involvement or any of the skills you've developed as a result.”

#2 Dissing former employers

Next was disclosing the reason for leaving an employer. Having never included this on a CV, I was surprised to hear it was a regular occurrence. According to the recruiters though, it shouldn't be.

"If a potential employer is interested in why you left previous positions, they'll ask," says Bennett.

"Some people overshare or provide negative information about a previous employer," he says. "Instead, wait until you're asked and then explain that you left because you're looking for a new challenge."

#3 Shooting yourself in the foot

On that note, also good to know: don't volunteer information about your criminal record – or anything else you don't need to share that could affect your chances. Director of Talent Blueprint Michael Berger says he's seen it happen.

"The resume's primary goal is to get you in the door or on the phone to a prospective employer," he says. "Any negative information is going to seriously damage your chances to advance in the recruitment process."

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"Unless instructed to include these details during the recruitment process or asked the question directly, there's no onus on you to declare this information."

#4 Oversharing

Starting out in a career with limited work experience, it's only natural to include plenty of information about what you do have that's relevant. The recruiters say it's fine at that time, but once you have more gigs under your belt, it won't fly.

"A CV needs to be a marketing document that promotes an applicant's key strengths," says Paul Lyons, Managing Partner at Watermark Search. "It shouldn't list every single responsibility in every single job throughout your career."

"Ideally, it's only one page – possibly two, but definitely not more. If it's longer, it suggests a lack of brevity and this tendency to not see the wood for the trees will scare many prospective employers away."

#5 Making stupid mistakes

Hunting for a new role while still in a full-time one can be stressful. Recruiters get that. What they don't understand however is how some applicants think that's an excuse for silly CV slip-ups.

"The biggest error you could make on your resume is a spelling or grammatical error," says Rachel Perkins, Director of JustMums Recruitment.

"Avoiding this is simple. Have a friend proofread your document or use the spell-check feature on your computer."

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Berger says he once had a photograph of a CV sent in instead of a PDF or Word document. It's something that could've also been easily avoided.

"Save a master version of your CV in your files or even e-mail records for future use," he says. "Even entry level roles in today's society need some competence around the use of computers."

#6 Including an sloppy photo

While there wasn't a final verdict on whether you should or shouldn't include a headshot on a CV, Jason Ajai, Principal Partner of TalentWeb, says if you do, make it an appropriate one.

"I've seen plenty of inappropriate photos in my time, and I almost never further their application," he says. "Get a second opinion on the photo you choose to use, ask someone other than a friend to tell you if the picture represents the professional image that you want to portray."

As the document that's going to make a first impression on your behalf, your resume does a lot of heavy lifting.