

Overcoming Resume Roadblocks

As unemployment levels rise and more people are being made redundant, we are finding ourselves in a situation that we haven't seen in Australia for 5 years, a highly competitive job market. Over recent years unemployment levels have been at record lows and employers struggled to employ high calibre candidates. This meant that it was relatively easy to move jobs, change and progress your career.

In less than 12 months the employment market has done a 180. Redundancies are on the increase, head count freezes are common in many organisations and employees are becoming increasingly worried about job security.



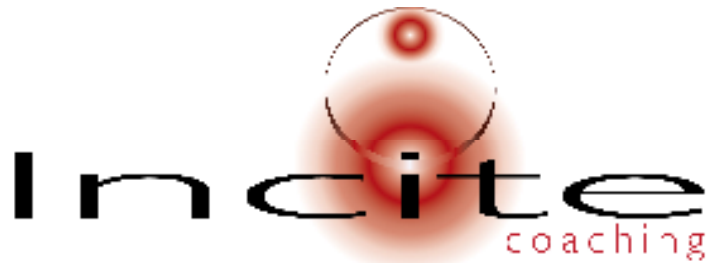
With the market as competitive as it is, now is the time to ensure that your resume and job applications are impressive. If you have a weak application and resume, the chances are it will end up in the bin or the deleted items box. After having spent a number of years in the recruitment industry, I can absolutely guarantee that recruiters and line managers have to go through some very tough culling exercises for jobs with a high number of applications. Spelling mistakes, poor layout and irrelevant skill sets are all signs of the "bin."

So in addition to the above examples, how can you make your resume stand out? What are the factors that will mean that your resume will end up in the short list pile?

Tailored and specific

A resume is your initial sales tool and has one goal, to get an interview with the employer. As with any sales tools you will have approximately 3-5 seconds to grab the reader's interest and compel them to read on.

Demonstrating that you want to work for the company and want this job is vital. Employers' will also want to see the benefit of hiring you over the next application and how you can add value to the business. If you fail to emphasise these points straight away, they will give the role to somebody



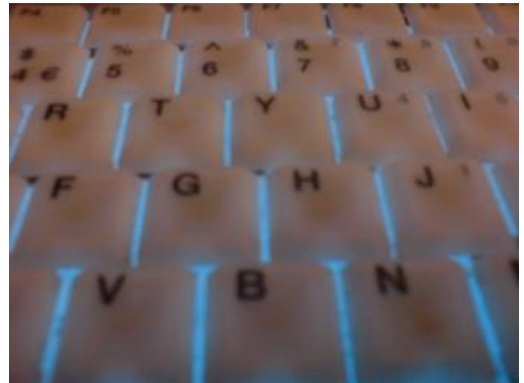
else. You might be perfect for the job and be brilliant in person, but the employer doesn't know this yet, so it is essential to demonstrate your skills early on.

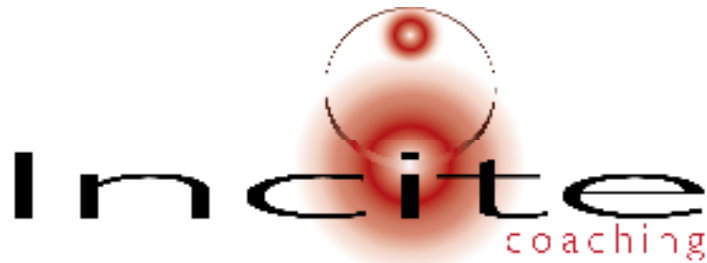
A tailored resume should answer the requirements of the job description. This will mean that you have to amend your resume for each job application. I have seen time and time again, job seekers who try to avoid this and use the same resume for all applications to save time. It actually ends up costing them more time as their job search will go on for longer as they will have to apply to more positions. Recruiters can tell the resumes which are generic. Key clues are that they are addressed to 'Sir/Madam' or 'To the Recruiter' or worst still to somebody else's name. If there is a Career Objective section, they quite often list three or more different position titles that the job seeker is looking for. This will just make it seem like you are applying for hundreds of jobs, or that you don't know what you want. Neither of which are appealing to a recruiter. Tailoring a resume will see you increase your success rate by at least 50% AND save time in the long run.

Layout & Content

Layout is critical. Your resume is your sales tool. If the layout is weak or messy, it will infer to the recruiter, rightly or wrongly, that you have no pride in your work or that you have poor attention to detail. Both attributes are competencies required for most jobs.

Select a clean layout, with clear font (Ariel works well), ensure that the font is the same throughout the resume and that underlining and italics are used consistently. It is common that after you have left one job you will add the responsibilities and achievements to your already written resume. Read through it before sending the resume off to make sure that it makes sense and that the font and bullet points are in the same style. I have seen many resumes which have round bullet points for the first half and square bullet points for the second half. Some even have three or four different styles. Making sure your resume is pleasing to the eye will increase the chances of the reader continuing.





The content and format of your resume may differ depending on the role and industry you are applying to. There are some things which should always be included:

- Name and contact details
- Career Objective
- Education
- Technical/Professional Experience
- Career History
- Achievements
- Referees

When designing your resume, in order to capture the reader's attention in the first 3-5 seconds, ensure that you are answering the key requirements from the advert or specification.

Name and Contact Details

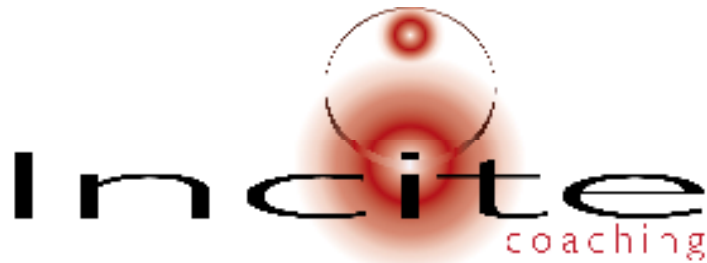
Remembering that your goal is to get an interview, make it easy for the recruiter to contact you. Put your name and contact details (including daytime phone number and email address) on every page in case pages become separated.

Career Objective

Your career objective should focus on the employer's requirements. It should be 3-4 lines maximum and be succinctly written. A Career Objective which appeals to the employer can mean the difference between an interview and the rubbish bin. Try to avoid commonly used terms such as 'utilize my skills' or 'progress my career' as they focus on you and trust me, are written on 90% of resumes.

Education

This is the second key thing that most employers will look for. Does this person have the skills required to do the job? Ensure your education background is clear and include the most recent grades if they are impressive.



Technical or Professional Experience

This section should be three or four bullet points detailing key experience which will make the recruiter want to call you over the next person. You can also include systems experience or professional body memberships.

Career History & Achievements

I recommend writing your previous employer, position title and dates for each role. Include a short paragraph with basic information regarding your previous employer, if they aren't an internationally recognised brand.

Then list some of your key responsibilities, ensuring they are relevant to the job you are applying for, and include a short achievements section, if you have worked on major projects or had some impressive wins in the role.

Referees

If you have spoken to your referees, it can be useful to include their contact details and position title to quantify their relevance as a referee. It is generally required that you include referees that you have reported to, with at least one to cover the last 2 years.

Showing that you have also taken the time and interest to complete a resume to a high standard will demonstrate your interest in the role. Writing succinctly and ordering information in the way the employer wants to see it will save them time, leaving them with memories of a positive experience of you. Match your experience to their requirements and selling why they should hire you, will result in a phone call and interview.

For more information on tailoring resumes, negotiating the market place or finding the job you want, call Jennifer at Incite Coaching on 02 9660 4215.