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PERSONAL FINANCE

The Art Of The Online Résumé

How to get yours past electronic filters that cull the herd of applicants



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Michael Shilleh, a 24-year-old recruiter with New York employment search firm Mergis Group, sifts through thousands of online résumés, mostly from applicants for financial-services jobs. Those who profess experience in key areas such as fixed-income derivatives are most likely to pass through his electronic filter. If only he had known a year ago what he knows now. "For a while I was struggling to find a job online," the Lehigh University graduate says. Not until he inserted more appropriate buzzwords into his Web-based résumé—such as "communication skills" and "results-driven"—did he start getting nibbles from potential employers.

Knowing how to assemble a résumé effectively for online consumption is a skill you'll need for just about any job search these days. Taleo Research, which studies management practices, found that 94% of the top 500 U.S. corporations solicit online résumés so their human resources departments can use software to whittle down a huge stack of candidates quickly to a manageable list of finalists.

An online curriculum vitae is a different document than the paper version. "The purpose is not to look like an individual, it's to look like a match," says Pat Kendall, a career coach in Tigard, Ore., who optimizes clients' résumés for online submission.

Looking like a match in the eyes of a filter, says Kendall, means speaking the language of job-specific keywords. Most electronic résumés are automatically dumped if they don't have a certain number of keywords that correspond with skills related to the position. The filter for a head sales position might require "cold calling" and "Microsoft Office."

Finding the right keywords is as easy as flipping through help-wanted ads. When several employers use the same words to describe similar positions, you would be wise to incorporate them into your CV. Kendall tells her clients to include around 25 keywords that are contextually relevant to their work history, without sounding stilted or forced. Writing that you are a "task-oriented achiever who micromanaged top performers while driving a 10% sales increase," for example, is not going to impress a discerning HR pro.

Job site Monster.com ([MNST](#)) contains some 70 million résumés that are routinely mined by employers. Empowered by résumé-savvy search engines, recruiters narrow down the vast field by rooting out keyword matches. Whereas five years ago a majority of the site's postings were from "active job seekers," says Eric Winegardner, Monster's director of product adoption, many today are what he calls "poised seekers," meaning they are "happy where they are, but eager to entertain an offer."

Some specialized résumé posting sites may put job seekers in a better position to court the most appropriate recruiters. For example, 6figurejobs.com screens applicants to make sure they earn at least \$100,000.

There's one more online résumé every job seeker should create: a personal statement that's posted on your own Web site and outlines your broader career goals. By linking it to a Monster.com profile and your MySpace or LinkedIn page and filling it with Google ([GOOG](#))-optimized keywords, you might attract employers that value your individuality along with your work skills.

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