

Résumé rescue

It seems like I've sent my résumé to at least 100 companies, but so far I've gotten no calls back. It can't be my fault, can it? Am I doing something wrong?

DOES THAT SOUND FAMILIAR TO YOU? As a management recruiter, I hear this all the time: "I've sent my résumé out to so many potential employers, but I haven't received any feedback." Actually, there is plenty of feedback in the silent treatment you are getting; you just need to figure out what that message is.

There are several possible reasons for the lack of response, and there are several possible fixes—some easy and some not so easy.

Reason #1: You're sending your résumé to the wrong place. Where you send your résumé is probably the most important factor in the success of your job search. Are you sending it to a convenient but nameless human resources (HR) e-mail address (HR@blackhole.com)? Or are you sending it to the hiring manager? If you are sending to a generic e-mail address, you have to wonder: Is anyone reading it, or is it going nowhere? Odds are that sending résumés blindly to HR is a waste of time, and chances are slim to none that your phone will ring.

The fix: Contact the right person. Target a real person, not a company. What you really need is face time with the hiring manager. So if the company is advertising, you should respond to the ad but locate and contact the hiring manager, too. Use contacts like suppliers and clients, trade association directories, Google.com, Fortune.com—anything or anyone at your disposal. Take full advantage of how small and interconnected the supply chain community is. And if your contacts don't pan out? Call the company's receptionist and ask for information until you reach someone who can get you the right name.

Even if a company is not advertising, send

your résumé to the hiring manager anyway, and then follow up with a phone call. Make something happen!

For smaller companies, contact the owners directly. Don't be afraid to call and ask for the name of the president, the logistics manager, or someone else in charge. Then send that person an e-mail or mail your résumé to that individual's attention. Be sure to follow up again with a phone call.

Sending your résumé to management recruiters can be helpful too, depending on what kind of active searches they have. Be forewarned, however: Although recruiters usually will look at your résumé, they may only spend a few seconds on it. But they can be key allies when you are a good fit for one of their clients.

Reason #2: HR is overwhelmed. When human resources managers run an ad for a position—especially on a popular Internet job board like monster.com—they get bombarded with an overwhelming number of responses, many of them automatically generated by programs that look for job postings by key words like "transportation." As a result, the responses may include a high ratio of unqualified candidates, such as bus drivers, pizza delivery boys, and customer service representatives from overseas.

HR professionals can be valuable in screening out inappropriate résumés. But the fact is, they may not fully understand the logistics or supply chain positions they are trying to fill. At any given time, HR managers may handle dozens of job openings. If they don't understand the position you're applying for, but they do understand the sales or customer service opening, which one do you think they'll work on first? Plus, they are likely to be cautious about sending candidates to the hiring manager if they aren't sure about how well a candidate fits the position. They may well believe that it's better to hold back that résumé than to be embarrassed when the hir-



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ing manager complains about receiving a bad match.

The fix: Make it easy on them. Anything you can do to make human resources professionals' jobs easier will work in your favor. For example, be sure to answer all of the questions on an application. If you don't provide an answer, they may consider you to be uncooperative or unable to follow directions, and they'll move on to the next applicant. You can also keep your cover letter and résumé short and to the point, addressing the specific requirements of the job posting in clear, concise language.

Reason #3: You're failing the key-word test. Some of the human resources departments at large companies use software to scan résumés for the key words that were included in job descriptions. If you're applying to a very large company, then the odds are pretty good that the recipient of that résumé you labored over all weekend will simply scan for key words and will not actually read it.

The fix: Customize your résumé. The biggest companies have databases of literally tens of thousands of résumés, so you need to make yourself easy to find. To be sure your résumé gets past the automated screening, it is important that you include the same trade buzz- words that appeared in the ad. It's so important, in fact, that you should customize your résumé to some degree for each job description or at least for each type of job you apply for.

Another strategy is to "massage" your job title. Isn't that résumé fraud? No, just clever marketing. Suppose your title is supply chain manager but you also are responsible for export compliance—and you are applying for an export compliance position. If your résumé says "supply chain/export compliance manager" it will increase the odds that you will be considered. But never exaggerate your rank. Don't say you're a director if you're really a manager.

Finally, don't lose hope. Like anything else in life, your success will depend on tenacious dedication to your mission as well as good timing and a bit of luck. Send your résumé to every company you possibly can. Try out some of these strategies, and you may hear your phone ring after all. □

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