

# CAREER TIPS FOR JOB SEARCH SUCCESS

How do I land my dream job in 2025?



**FREE  
DOWNLOAD**

Cutting-edge strategies for job seekers from the National Résumé Writers' Association, the only national nonprofit organization supporting professional résumé writers.

**2025**

**Vol 6**

[www.theNRWA.org](http://www.theNRWA.org)

# INTRODUCTION

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**2025.**

We have seen some excruciatingly hard times in recent history, and one thing continues to prove true. **You are stronger than you think.** This resource is built to help you navigate and push to outsmart the system, stand out as a candidate, and do work you actually want to do. We don't hold back. There are raw and real questions that you need the answers to in this fiercely competitive job market.

We have compiled world class expert insights to help you contend with everything from discrimination in the hiring process to best practices for your AI-integrated resume. We have done our part to help you keep up with the times. We stand ready as your capable guides.

You can always look to the NRWA, we train for this. We keep watch so we can help you even during the frustrating times. Life has a way of testing your resilience, and we have sharpened our iron, so we know how to help you.

Like all previous years, we did not shy away from the hard questions like... *"As someone with a hearing impairment, should I mention this on my resume or during interviews, and if so, how can I do so in a way that focuses on my qualifications and strengths?"* Instead, we faced them head on so you could have a leg up in this challenging economy.

As you consume the contents of this guide, please refer to it as often as you need and share it with others who have expressed frustration in their job search or careers. Or share it with those who have embraced the reality that help is available and want to tap into qualified sources of information.

For your information, every response in this guide has been evaluated with strict criteria to make sure it upholds NRWA standards, and most importantly that the responses will help you get the results you, your students, your clients, and/or your networks need.

I implore you...don't let this be just another download. But let it serve as annual training for yourself or those you serve to keep moving your career forward.

Cheers to an amazing year and an accelerated search,

Brenda Mariah,  
NRWA President, 2024

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## About the National Résumé Writers' Association

*As the only nonprofit, volunteer-driven association for professional résumé writers, the National Résumé Writers' Association (NRWA) has set the national standard for excellence in the résumé writing industry.*

# FOREWORD

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While many people are surprised to hear that the art of résumé writing has stimulated the growth of an entire segment of the career services industry, it isn't as novel as one might think. There is, in fact, evidence that it was inspired by Leonardo da Vinci, who made his living as an armorer — an inventor of weapons — before he became famous for his artistry as a painter.

In what we consider an essential part of the hiring process today; Leonardo wrote a letter in 1482 to the Duke of Milan seeking his patronage. His remarkable letter listed his skills and experience and, most importantly, called out the benefits his skills would produce for his prospective employer. In other words, Leonardo da Vinci became the first person in recorded history to write what we know today as a résumé — a word inspired by the French word for *summary*.

The résumé trend continued with wealthy patrons in the 1500s and 1600s, encouraging the submission of résumés from the skilled artisans and laborers they sought to hire. It doesn't take too much imagination to suppose that enterprising writers of the day may have assisted in writing these documents for the otherwise widely illiterate population.

Fast forward to the present day. In 1997, the National Résumé Writers' Association (NRWA) was founded as the first and only nonprofit professional trade association for résumé writers in the world. For more than 20 years, the mission of the NRWA has remained unchanged: to increase the visibility of the industry, encourage ethical practices, promote excellence, and raise industry standards through peer marketing and training. While résumé writing as a profession was still relatively uncommon in 1997, it has grown over the years, with new members joining the NRWA every month.

Résumé writers come from diverse backgrounds: business, human resources, recruiting, and career counseling are common ones. Many résumé writers hold advanced degrees and career coaching credentials in addition to the prestigious professional résumé writing certification — Nationally Certified Résumé Writer (NCRW) — offered by the NRWA. Acknowledging that the career services industry is not immune to digital disruption, the NRWA rolled out its groundbreaking Nationally Certified Online Profile Expert (NCOPE) certification in 2018. Members who have earned the NCRW credential have demonstrated the highest standards of résumé writing excellence. Members who have earned the NCOPE have been educated and certified to help job seekers unleash the power of LinkedIn. Besides these two premier certifications, many of our members have earned other professional résumé writing and career coaching credentials as well.

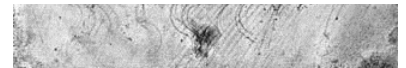
All NRWA members are true résumé experts, committed to upholding the highest ethical and professional standards. The NRWA offers members ongoing professional development opportunities utilizing industry-leading webinars, training programs, resources, and conferences. This allows NRWA professionals to stay abreast of changes in the careers industry and best serve our clients and business partners.

In 2018, the Public Image Committee of the NRWA rolled out [ResumeExperts.TheNRWA.org](https://ResumeExperts.TheNRWA.org), a site dedicated to serving the job-seeking public. Visitors to the site will find valuable information to help them understand the value of working with a professional résumé writer and have access to our member database to search and find a professional who will meet their needs.

The Ask the Experts section of the Resume Experts site is a valuable resource for job seekers, providing an easy way to get answers from our expert members about writing a résumé, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile, as well as



*Self Portrait, Leonardo da Vinci*



the entire job searching process. This book is a compilation of the questions answered by the many career services experts in the NRWA from January through December 2022.

As da Vinci demonstrated in 1482, there is real artistry involved in writing a compelling and persuasive résumé, and NRWA members are steeped in the craft. The résumé experts at the NRWA are committed to the career success of the job seekers we work with and offer tremendous inside perspective and advice to help job seekers navigate the evermore complex job market and achieve long-term career goals.

We hope you learn from the advice in this book, and we invite you to visit our Ask the Experts page at [ResumeExperts.TheNRWA.org](https://ResumeExperts.TheNRWA.org) to ask your own questions, which you may find featured on our blog and included in a future volume of this series.

*Michelle Dumas*

*Past NRWA President (2017) and past Chair, NRWA Public Image Committee (2016, 2018)*

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# Chapter One

## A WINNING RÉSUMÉ

*Your #1 Career Marketing Tool*



Q  
A

**I've been in my industry for many years. In that time, technology and methodologies have evolved significantly. How do I demonstrate on my resume that I can keep up with the younger generation?**

You can keep the expertise but cull the names of outdated technologies and skills from your resume. For example, Great Plains software, which was used years ago, could be described as an ERP system. Also, note the most current tools used in your daily work, including newer technologies you're studying as coursework in your Education section.

Laura Smith-Proulx

Keeping your skills current is essential to remaining competitive with newer professionals in your field. On your resume, highlight your continuous skills development and showcase your adaptability, while framing your experience as a competitive advantage within the role. Decrease the bias of ageism by using a modern resume design and limiting your relevant experience to the last 12-15 years.

Cathy Lanzalac

Don't list any of the old methodologies or programs that are no longer used (i.e. WordPerfect, Microsoft Works, etc.). Instead, list the current programs and technologies that are applicable to your field. If you have room on your resume, you could detail a specialized project that you completed with popular technologies. Finally, make sure that you demonstrate your adaptability in the workplace.

Heather Rothbauer-Wanish

Show that you've embraced change. Highlight recent training, certifications, or upskilling efforts in your industry, and make sure to include examples of how you've adapted to new technologies or methodologies. Demonstrating your involvement in modern tools, systems, or trends alongside your experience shows that you're evolving with the industry and can compete with anyone.

Scott Gardner



**What are the best practices for including publications, patents, or other intellectual property on my resume? Or should I list them at all?**



Publications and patents represent the pinnacle of expertise in many fields. You can show "Patent holder" or "Published author" in your resume summary or LinkedIn About section, with the details in a later Publications section. Medical or scientific candidates can list all their presentations and publications in multi-page addendums (presented on request) in addition to a traditional resume.

Laura Smith-Proulx

What content you include on your resume should speak to the interests of your audience and the job you are applying for. When appropriate, tailor this section based on how these accomplishments demonstrate your industry expertise, innovation, or thought leadership. Create a separate section to showcase relevant information using clean formatting and proper citation style.

Cathy Lanzalaco

If your publications, patents, or intellectual property are relevant to the job, absolutely list them! Best practices include creating a dedicated "Publications" or "Patents" section and using a consistent format with titles, dates, and where they were published or filed. Keep the list concise, and if it's too lengthy, consider creating a separate addendum or linking to an online portfolio.

Scott Gardner



**Should I stuff my resume with keywords at the bottom in white text?**



Simply, NO! Applicant Tracking Systems have become more sophisticated and recruiters are savvy to these tactics, which can result in your application being flagged as deceptive. A more effective approach is to incorporate the relevant skills from the job post and back them up with results. This is

proven effective in passing ATS screenings while ensuring your resume reads well to human reviewers.

Deirdre Rock

Don't do it--the white text won't fool anyone! Recruiters and hiring managers need to see the keywords in context. If you don't have a certain skill, leave it off your resume, and focus instead on the skills you do have. Incorporate the keywords into your accomplishments to prove that you have actually used those skills/tools with the required degree of competency to produce positive results.

Alison King

Never use white text on your resume for anything! Keywords represent your strongest skills and should match the content of the job postings you are pursuing. These terms have the best impact when used throughout your resume to describe achievements related to your ideal roles. You can add a Skills section for keywords, but be aware some employers prefer to see them primarily in your experience.

Laura Smith-Proulx

No. This would be the equivalent of cheating on a test. You will be discovered, and it will reflect poorly on your candidacy. Tread carefully! The text actually shows up when employers see your profile in their ATS. This never ends well. Just include an actual keyword sections that reflect all that you can do. No need to be deceptive.

Brenda Mariah

Keyword stuffing is an old technique of which HR authorities are well aware. It is viewed as a kind of cheating that may immediately kill your candidacy. Rather, keywords and keyword phrases should be artfully written into descriptive content throughout your document. Such content would naturally be included if you are qualified, and it should never be included if it is not true.

Mary Jo King

This "keyword stuffing" trend that resurfaced on social media can end up hurting you. Applicant tracking systems will read the white font and make it visible on the scanned resume that the recruiter will see. The recruiter will know you are trying to game the hiring process and get turned off. Pasting keywords without quantifiable achievements doesn't make you more qualified for the job.

Emily Christakis

No, stuffing your resume with keywords in white text is a bad practice. Instead, focus on naturally incorporating relevant keywords throughout your resume in context, aligning with the job description for better results.

Scott Gardner

To stand out in today's competitive job market, your resume must cater to both ATS algorithms and the hiring managers who will review it. Using white text may pass the first round, but your resume needs to also demonstrate your qualifications to the human reader who decides whether or not you move forward in the process. I suggest integrating relevant keywords throughout.

Tanya Floyd

Please don't stuff your resume with white text. Instead, you could showcase your skills by demonstrating your competence in your accomplishment stories. You may even opt to label each accomplishment with a major

keyword or two. You are also welcome to highlight a few skills in a Core Competencies section, but make sure the words are visible to the naked eye.

Tammeca Riley

No, not once, not ever.

Cheryl Minnick



**I have extensive international work experience. How do I translate foreign job titles, qualifications, and experience to be understood and valued by domestic employers?**



Standardize job titles by researching similar domestic roles. Translate education, certifications, and licensing to the US equivalent. Employ terminology and phrasing that aligns with comparable positions and industries. Showcase your unique value, such as cross-cultural communication, adaptability, and multilingual skills. Finally, double-check your spelling to ensure it aligns with US English.

Deirdre Rock



**How do I quantify and showcase soft skills effectively on my resume?**



I try to avoid putting a laundry list of soft skills in the competency section of a resume. Instead, I look to showcase how soft skills were applied to attain a result, outcome, and/or accomplishment. For example: Grew employee engagement by increasing transparent communication and facilitating more teamwork.

Jaime Chambron



**As a woman, how should I present my achievements on my resume to counter the gender pay gap?**



Sad that this is still an issue. Start by targeting companies with equal opportunity track records. Use gender-neutral language in your resume —perhaps, even using initials instead of female first name. Then, of course, highlight relevant experience with quantifiable accomplishments/results and leadership roles, emphasizing professional contributions and merit. Prove your merit then negotiate your worth.

Donna Tucker

Pay gap or not, your accomplishments should be front loaded, showing right at the start how your efforts made money, saved time, or grew the bottom line. The best place to secure competitive pay is in your later salary negotiation, but your resume should make it clear that hiring you adds monetary and quality value to the organization. Please stop only listing your responsibilities and cease using diluted language, like "supported." It is crucial for you to provide evidence that what you bring IS valuable.

Brenda Mariah

It does not matter what your gender is in writing a resume. All resumes need to provide key accomplishments in the summary, then position specific accomplishments. Remember to lead with the result, then note the action, who or what was done, and how or why it was done.

Jaime Chambron



### **Should I put my address on my resume?**



Identity theft is rampant, so it's a good idea to simply cite your city name, abbreviated state name and ZIP code on your resume. In this digital age, it is no longer necessary to write out your entire mailing address, which exposes you to potential identity theft as well as bias around where you live (e.g., an urban, inner city vs. an exclusive gated community).

Emily Christakis

Remote work and relocating for jobs are both very common. Also, companies don't need your address until they decide to hire you. Some companies use address info to eliminate candidates. For these reasons, it's now acceptable to leave off your address.

Edward Lawrence



### **I'm not a good writer. I think I should let an AI chatbot write my resume. Can recruiters tell? Do they care?**



Leveraging tech is smart. But—it takes \*skill\* to stand out when your competitors are using the same tools. A generic or questionable AI-generated resume won't help you. Recruiters value unique, authentic and committed candidates. Ask yourself: Are you skilled in AI prompting? Can you get further with a professional? How badly do you want the job? Think Big Picture → What is your Ultimate Goal...?

Jonathan Estreich

Using AI can expedite the writing process, but in most cases, candidates should not rely solely on AI-generated content. Your resume is more than a collection of facts—it also tells a story of who you are as a professional and how you will solve the employer's need or problem. Recruiters care about finding the right candidate for the role, and telling that story often requires a human touch.

Scot Hulshizer

AI is not good at writing either. It borrows, steals, and fabricates. So, don't use AI to write your original content. Best practice is to write your content and ask the AI how it would make it better. Check the results; use the best parts. Experienced recruiters can discern when AI wrote original content. Whether they care or not, your resume probably won't stand out.

Edward Lawrence

Just like professors can tell when a student paper was written by AI, recruiters can tell when a candidate resume used AI. They will be concerned about the accomplishments listed. Did you really make those impacts? If you

are struggling to write a professional resume, consider hiring a certified resume writer to help either write it or perform final copy editing of one you draft.

Jaime Chambron



### **What are the most common mistakes people make on their resumes that really make a difference in securing a job interview?**



The number one mistake I see on resumes is not tailoring your summary to the job you're applying for! I recommend using a branding statement for the top of your resume. Talk about your goals, your best achievements, and some of your most relevant skills. Remember to focus on what you can do for the employer ... not what you want from them!

Laura Fontenot

Most resumes fail because people position themselves for the role they have vs. the one they want. Your positioning impacts your entire job search strategy. In the context of a resume, you must highlight relevant qualifications and industry-specific skills aligned to the job up front. Provide evidence of how you used your qualifications and skills to make an impact in your experience section.

Kate Williamson

Most common resume mistakes are:

- (1) Put your contact information in the body of the resume, never a header, footer, text box, or graphic.
- (2) Write experience section with accomplishment statements, not just job responsibilities. Prove to the reader you have the skills and experience they are looking for.
- (3) Use common section headings that an ATS will recognize and parse correctly.

Lucie Yeomans

Oh, so many! That's why a professional resume writer can be so helpful. First, be careful of typos and grammatical errors (includes any missing contact info). Then, try not to be generic in your presentation; there is a lot of competition, and you want to stand out from the others by demonstrating your unique brand / value to the hiring organization. Don't say too much, though; keep it concise.

Donna Tucker

A critical mistake is not tailoring the content to the position. Resumes should be shaped based on your target position, using your experience and accomplishments to support the position requirements. Is it relevant? Ensure it aligns with the job. Is it impactful? Prioritize quantifiable achievements and results that demonstrate your value. Is it recent? Avoid including outdated information.

Deidre Rock

A common mistake is misalignment between your resume and online persona. Inconsistencies can deter employers who cross-check platforms. Ensure your LinkedIn and professional sites complement your resume's skills, achievements and tone. By managing your digital footprint, you can control the narrative. The result is a cohesive message that strengthens your brand, making you a compelling candidate.

Jonathan Estreich



### **How can I address a gap in employment due to mental health reasons in my resume without compromising my privacy?**



Whenever a client tells me they had a gap in their history due to a personal matter, I always use the phrase “personal sabbatical.” I write it just like it’s a job and place it in the history with the other roles, including beginning and ending dates. Whenever possible, I’ll also add a brief description of how my client is eager and ready to continue their career.

Laura Fontenot

Whether mental health or chronic physical illness, I often lean on "personal sabbatical," or "caregiving for a loved one." Yes, the loved one may be you, but that counts. You are honestly accounting for the time away while not costing yourself future opportunities. Some employers will discriminate, so please protect yourself.

Brenda Mariah

Label the time as a “Personal Leave” which is a widely accepted term and doesn’t require further explanation. If questioned on this or if you want to detail information on your resume, include something like this: Invested time to focus on personal growth and professional development. This has equipped me with new skills and renewed motivation to make a positive impact in my next position.

Jane Roqueplot

I have worked with many clients who have had health issues and left the workforce. What I do is indicate the time period as a separate job, and may call it a sabbatical. Explain that you took time to take care of family health issues that are now resolved. If you did any studying or work while not employed, indicate that in the time period.

Robin Schlinger



### **How can I make my resume standout when there are already over 500 applicants?**



My advice for clients worried about stiff competition is the same as for those facing only a few other applicants: write concisely and focus on the most relevant information. Don’t try to stand out with overly flashy formats! Instead, consider starting your resume with a branding statement. Outline your goals and support them with achievements and results! (WHY will you be great at the role?)

Laura Fontenot

When the application pool is crowded, here's where leveraging your network is especially helpful. When you have an inside advocate that can vouch for you, you tend to jump to the front of the line since your application is accompanied by a trusted referral.

Brenda Mariah

To stand out, align your skills and experience with the role. Create a strong summary statement that briefly explains who you are, what you do, and your value. Then, provide proof of your ability to deliver results by

highlighting achievements with quantifiable outcomes to showcase your impact. Use a clean professional design, include keywords, and proofread to ensure your document is error-free.

Tammy Shoup

Network to the job. Find someone from the company who can recommend you for the position. If you network to the position you may have an 80% better chance to get the job. When you write the resume, ensure you include how you meet all the requirements, show how you have added value to previous employers, use quantification, and cover all keywords. Perhaps ask for a professional for help.

Robin Schlinger



### **How can I leverage my hobbies or interests to stand out in my job applications?**



If your hobbies and interests augment your professional experience and education, you can mention these items in an intro summary or add an "Other Experience" section at the end of your resume including these items. Only include if they provide insight into things that will help you in your next role or culture you are looking to be in next.

Jaime Chambron

Highlight transferable skills gained from your hobbies to stand out. Whether it's exceeding fundraising goals at your child's school or strengthening teamwork in pickleball tournaments, showcasing extracurriculars gives you a competitive edge and signals you're a well-rounded candidate. Mentioning hobbies also serves as a great icebreaker in interviews, helping you connect with the hiring team.

Emily Christakis

You can include hobbies on your resume to help you stand out but only if they add value. Include hobbies that demonstrate relevant skills, like strategic thinking in competitive gaming, or leadership in organizing a community group. Hobbies can also show cultural fit, like a love for hiking at an adventure-focused company. Keep them brief and only include ones that reinforce your qualifications.

Cathy Lanzalaco



### **I have an employment gap due to taking time off for caregiving responsibilities, which seems to be affecting my job prospects. How can I best present my experience and skills on my resume to overcome this gap and compete with other candidates?**



I would note the gap clearly either in the experience section or a quick note in your opening summary of your career. Many have had to take breaks and I recommend my clients note it in their resume so they don't get dinged for a gap.

Jaime Chambron

To address a caregiving gap, consider using the term "Caregiving Sabbatical" on your resume with a note like, "Dedicated time to family care needs, now fully resolved." Highlight recent skills, any volunteer work, or relevant coursework completed during this period to show continued growth. Focus on showcasing key achievements and abilities from past roles to strengthen your candidacy.

Cathy Lanzalaco



**Can I include my digital work portfolios, personal websites, or online publications on my resume?**



Yes, however the approach will vary by industry. This is favorable for fields like marketing, PR, web design, photography, and journalism. Use concise text hyperlinks, or QR codes for tech-savvy fields. Ensure content is professional, current, and job-relevant. Maintain consistent branding with your resume. If possible, add analytics to show your work's impact, particularly in creative industries.

Jonathan Estreich

I usually have my clients add all of their digital work portfolios, personal websites, and online publications to their LinkedIn page, then include their LinkedIn URL in the resume header. If there is 1 personal website that includes all the other content, we sometimes add that URL with the LinkedIn URL.

Jaime Chambron

Yes!! You absolutely can and absolutely should in most cases. Showcasing your work can be a great way for employers to see your true potential. Just make sure that the information is relevant and up-to-date. Linking a website that hasn't been updated in a decade is not the way to go.

Jonathan Nugent

Yes, you can include digital portfolios, personal websites, or online publications on your resume, especially for tech and creative roles as they can offer employers a deeper insight into your capabilities. It's important to ensure they're professionally relevant, recent, and maintained, to ensure they provide an advantage to you, not raise additional questions.

Cathy Lanzalaco

You can, but beware. If you are an artist or developer, a working website or GitHub relevant to your career goal is a must. If your personal website or publications contain thought leadership that is relevant to your goal, do reference these live, working links. However, if these might be considered divisive—or needless distractions from your primary goal—consider refraining from including them.

Amy Adler

Yes! First, make sure the portfolio, website, or publications apply to your current goal. If your personal website has nothing to do with your professional goals, don't include it! But if you are showcasing your past efforts, you can include a link at the top of the resume in your contact information. I recommend a separate section for online publications; include a few of the most relevant ones.

Laura Fontenot

Many resume experts caution jobseekers about inserting clickable hyperlinks onto their resumes. Their reasoning is that some ATS or email settings may potentially distort the hyperlinks, or worse, reject documents that include them. That being said, a safer course of action is to include the entries as non-clickable URLs that can be used by decision-makers to access the portfolios or publications.

Grant Cooper

Yes! This is a great way to enhance your field expertise. Researchers can feature select publications in a dedicated section on the resume or include a link to a more comprehensive list. Developers can showcase a GitHub profile or specific repositories by including a link on their resume. Think relevance. Make sure any provided links are active and directed to the latest pertinent content.

Kate Williamson



### **How do I add freelance, volunteer work, or unconventional job experiences to my resume?**



First, assess if the work aligns with your target job. If not, omit it or keep brief and include under “Other Experience.” If relevant, highlight high-impact achievements that mirror the job description, focusing on quantifiable results. In your resume, be succinct; use your cover letter to elaborate on how these experiences uniquely prepare you for the role. Enhance their value with testimonials.

Jonathan Estreich

If the experience is relevant to your next role, denotes transferable skills, or demonstrates you were doing something between other jobs, I would add it under your main experience section. Otherwise, you can list it at the end of the resume under an “Other Experience” section.

Jaime Chambron

Just like with traditional experience, align freelance, volunteer work, or unconventional jobs with the posting at hand. Expand titles to improve role clarity when necessary, detail tasks and skills, quantify your impact, and include relevant keywords that relate to the job description. Not all experience is created equal, so be strategic about what you decide to include on your resume.

Cathy Lanzalaco

Work is work! Whether your experience is paid or unpaid is by far less important than your accomplishments within it. You can give every role relevant to your career goal the same treatment on your resume in your employment experience; positions less relevant or outside of your career trajectory might be considered volunteerism and be placed in a separate section toward the end of your document.

Amy Adler

I generally use a separate section for volunteer work. Freelance and unconventional job experiences can be trickier! If your freelance or unconventional work is relevant and filled a gap between “conventional” roles in your job history, you can include it in the experience section. Otherwise, a separate section might be best.

Laura Fontenot

There are two approaches, depending on your career chronology. If the job experiences help fill time gaps in your job history, list them along with your more conventional positions. It is perfectly fine to create a job title, entity name, and job description for each one. On the other hand, if time gaps are not an issue, place them in a separate heading, such as "Consulting & Freelance Positions."

Grant Cooper

If you are currently employed but consult or volunteer on the side, you can feature these experiences in a separate section (i.e., Consulting Engagements). You can use consulting or volunteer work to hide any employment gaps (6+ months) while highlighting impact. Full-time consultants/freelancers can position these experiences in reverse chronological order, starting with current or most recent.

Kate Williamson



**How can I ensure a professional-looking resume in both design and content – and still pass through the applicant tracking software systems?**



Use a simple format in MS Word with clear headings, bullet points, and standard fonts. Develop content tailored for the role by reviewing the job description first. Focus on creating quantifiable achievement bullet points using keywords from the posting to show your fit for the role and ability to meet the hiring need. Avoid graphics, tables, and unusual fonts.

Robert Rosales

Keep the design clean and simple. It is best to use a standard font, clear headings, and no graphics. Tailor content to highlight your qualifications that match the role's requirements. Prioritize achievements and skills over long descriptions. Quality, targeted content ensures both a polished look and ATS compatibility.

Scott Gardner

# Chapter Two

## BEYOND THE RÉSUMÉ

*Leveraging LinkedIn in your Job Search*



**Does updating my LinkedIn profile send a red flag to my current employer?**



It depends on the employer, but most of the time I tell my clients that it's okay to keep your LinkedIn profile updated! If you're asked about it, you can simply let your employer know that you're making an effort this year to keep things updated. You can even call it your New Year's resolution!

Laura Fontenot

You should never feel guilty or scared about updating your profile. While it may signal to your employer that you are job seeking, a complete profile is crucial to getting found in recruiter searches. To avoid suspicion, turn off the 'share profile updates with your network' setting and, if using, adjust your open-to-work banner to hide it from non-recruiters.

Kate Williamson

It may be scary, but it doesn't need to be. If your employer notices that your profile is spiffed up, just say that you care about the company's brand and want to ensure you are representing the company as professionally as

possible. Also in settings, be sure to select that you only want your open-to-work profile visible to recruiters, and you can change your visibility to private mode.

Donna Tucker

Yes, it can, but there are ways to minimize this.

- 1) Ensure your ""Share profile updates with your network"" under Visibility in Settings/Privacy is turned OFF.
- 2) "Drip" your updates, starting with the oldest jobs first.
- 3) Gradually update your current position, starting with a brief keyword-rich description of your job responsibilities and adding a few key skills.

Lucie Yeomans

Updating your LinkedIn profile might cause initial curiosity from your current employer. However, you can address any concerns positively by stating, "I saw an opportunity to highlight our company and our dynamic product/service offerings and my contributions." For sales roles, you can add, "I hope to attract potential leads." This approach can be tailored to your role and the business.

Deidre Rock

As long as you do not turn on the "Open for Work" banner that would allow your company's recruiters to find you in candidate searches, no. LinkedIn does not do any notifications about when or how you update your profile if you do not want to share that you made an update. In some cases, professionals need to update their profile to help them in the position they are in, say, sales.

Jaime Chambron

It's perfectly acceptable to refresh your profile. In fact, it's smart career management. The key is subtle, routine enhancements—highlighting your evolving skills, accomplishments and contributions. Be strategic with timing and messaging. Keep updates relevant to your current role while preparing for the future: focus on transferability. Demonstrate a growth mindset, not desperation to leave.

Jonathan Estreich



**What specific elements should I focus on to optimize my LinkedIn profile for visibility and engagement?**



For greater visibility, focus on optimizing elements that are first seen on a desktop and mobile application, your photo, banner, and headline. Studies have found that a LinkedIn profile is 40% more likely to be clicked on if it contains a headshot. For greater engagement, don't forget to add your phone number and/or email in your contact information.

Cheryl Minnick

I recommend the banner, headline, about, last two jobs, and skills. For the banner, I recommend using a Canva template with target job titles and contact information. For the headline, incorporate target job titles and key skills. The about is a career summary, key accomplishments, and core skills. Detail responsibilities and accomplishments for last two jobs. Then add as many skills as you can.

Jaime Chambron



## How can I use LinkedIn Groups to expand my professional network and find job opportunities?



I love LinkedIn Groups! Join ones relevant to your industry career goals. Start by observing, then engage by asking questions and sharing your POV. Comment on discussions to showcase your expertise. Groups narrow LinkedIn's vast network, connecting you with active members. Share that you're seeking opportunities. Build relationships by offering value and following up.

Camille Roberts

Leveraging your professional network is the best way to land a new job! Expand your network by joining relevant LinkedIn Groups in your industry. Engage in discussions, post insights, and connect with members—consistent interaction builds visibility, relationships, and connections. This is a great way to get noticed by recruiters and learn of job opportunities that may not be posted publicly

Robert Rosales

Find niche LinkedIn Groups in your field and actively contribute thoughtful comments or start discussions to stand out. Build connections with group members by referencing shared interests or conversations. Watch for insider job postings or tips shared within the group and use it as a springboard to connect with decision-makers in your industry.

Scott Gardner

# Chapter Three

## NOW, LET'S USE YOUR JOB SEARCH TOOLS

*Find the strategies that work for you.*



Q

**If I have experienced workplace discrimination due to my LGBTQ+ identity in the past, should I mention this during interviews or on my resume, and what is the best way to discuss it constructively?**

A

It's important to focus on your skills, experience, and qualifications in interviews and on your resume. If you feel discussing your LGBTQ+ identity is relevant, like highlighting resilience or advocating for diversity, frame it in a constructive way. Share how it shaped your leadership, adaptability, or efforts to foster inclusivity, but keep the focus on how it made you stronger professionally.

Scott Gardner

It's generally not advisable to mention past experiences of discrimination during job interviews or on your resume. Focus instead on your qualifications, skills, and how you can contribute to the company. If addressing workplace culture or diversity is important to you, you could ask about the company's policies on diversity, equity, and inclusion during the interview. This approach allows you to gauge their commitment to a supportive environment without discussing personal past negative experiences.

Sara Timm



**I've been hearing a lot about "ghost jobs" (job listings that appear on job boards or company websites but are not actually available positions). How do I recognize them so I don't waste my time?**



Go directly to the employer website to see if these positions are being advertised. Some job aggregator services will display jobs from months ago, making it seem as if they are active. Don't forget to reach out directly to connections and indicate your interest in the position. This can help keep your name in circulation if they've already hired for a past role that may open again in the future.

Laura Smith-Proulx

There is no one way to recognize ghost jobs, but some red flags that may indicate one include a poor online company footprint, a lack of detail surrounding the job specifications, no contact information, or repeated postings of the same positions. Be alert, do your research, and be willing to walk away from job postings that don't add up.

Cathy, Lanzalaco

Ghost jobs can be frustrating, but there are a few signs to watch for. If a listing has been up for months without updates, vague descriptions, or no specific contact details, it might be a ghost job. Also, check if the company continuously posts the same job without real movement. To avoid wasting time, focus on roles with clear details and recent activity from the employer.

Scott Gardner

A ghost job is a fishing expedition to test the waters of the talent pipeline, assess salary trends, and boost brand visibility, without an intent to hire. These jobs are tricky to identify, but often will be posted for a long time with no noticeable increase in employee size or new hires noted on LinkedIn. Check Glassdoor reviews and connect with current employees for insider information.

Cheryl Minnick



**As someone who has taken time off work to address mental health issues, should I mention this employment gap on my resume or LinkedIn profile, and if so, what is the best way to explain it to potential employers?**



If your time away exceeded 6 months then you can simply include a line in your Experience section that reads "Professional Development & Personal Time Away," dated "to present." Then, to keep it ethical...start working on some professional development right now. When discussing, mention your newfound energy and focus on how you've prepared for the current role via learning and development.

Brenda Mariah

Mentioning mental health issues could be a deal-breaker in your job search. With the exception of certain sensitive positions, such as working with children or leadership roles, it may be best to not volunteer information regarding your mental health challenges, presuming that they are under control with appropriate medication. If your gap is under one year, it may not be evident on your resume.

We try to reduce the negative impact of significant career breaks with an explanatory entry in the experience section. It should be formatted like your employment experience as a Sabbatical or Leave of Absence with the date range and a brief explanation that addresses the timeframe as positively as possible (e.g., recovering from illness, family caregiving, volunteering, or educational pursuits).

Mary Jo King

It's not necessary to mention mental health on your resume or LinkedIn. Instead, focus on skills, achievements, and what you bring to the table. If asked, you can explain the gap briefly, framing it around personal development or time spent recharging and preparing to bring your best to your next role.

Scott Gardner

Disclosing specific details of health conditions isn't a requirement. If you are comfortable in an interview stating, "I had a health condition that is now resolved," then do so, but keep it simple. Unless there was a cultural or academic experience or something similar, I do not recommend adding this information in the resume or LinkedIn profile. It's best to only mention a personal sabbatical.

Tammeca Riley



**I'm interested in freelancing / gig work. What are the challenges and benefits of this path, and how can I prepare for success?**



Freelancing offers broad exposure, flexibility, and autonomy but comes with challenges like unpredictable income, no benefits, and self-management demands. To succeed, build a strong network, maintain a consistent client pipeline, set clear contracts, and manage finances carefully, including saving for taxes and emergencies. Ensure you keep your resume current and utilize freelance platforms.

Deirdre Rock

I often recommend freelance work to my career change clients because it gives them a chance to try out their new function/field before committing to the full transition. I've always freelanced in addition to working full time, so my top tip is to set specific times when you will do your freelance work and stick to them. But don't forget to reserve time in your schedule for hobbies and family!

Alison King

Gig work requires you to find clients, promote your skills, pitch yourself for new assignments, continually earn rave reviews, and tend to your own training. Companies will pay you without collecting employer-side taxes, so you will need to set up tax filing and payment schedules for yourself. This type of work can be lucrative, but you will often need to outperform others to keep busy.

Laura Smith-Proulx

Freelancing and gig work can be necessary money-making strategies until a suitable career position is within reach. The upside is a flexible schedule, earnings based on effort, and the ability to interact with others for networking purposes. The downside is that temporary positions don't generally improve your resume, and employers like to see career progression on a consistent basis.

Grant Cooper

Freelancing offers great perks like flexibility, choosing your projects, and working from anywhere, but it also comes with challenges like unpredictable income, finding clients, and no benefits. To succeed, build a solid portfolio, set clear rates, manage your time well, and keep networking.

Scott Gardner



### What are “knockout questions” and how do I avoid them when applying for jobs online?



Knockout questions screen candidates for basic qualifications, which are set by the hiring manager. These may include questions like, “Are you a U.S. Citizen?” or “Do you have 3 years of supervisory experience?” These are unavoidable in the application process, and unfortunately, if your answers don’t align with the required qualifications, then you will likely receive a rejection email.

Alison King

You really can't avoid knockout questions when applying to posted jobs. These questions will be used at various points in the screening process to filter out candidates who do not meet employer requirements. It is best to answer these items as truthfully as possible, as these queries are structured around items of importance to the hiring team.

Laura Smith-Proulx

Recruiters create knockout questions to disqualify applicants who fail to meet a posted job's requirements. They are part of the online application through a company's ATS. They are unavoidable Yes/No questions such as, "Do you have 3-5 years of experience in Marketing?" You can pass them by applying to jobs where you meet the minimum education and experience requirements.

Lisa Dupras

Usually these are yes/no questions or "do you have X number of years of experience" doing something. You often cannot avoid answering these, and you need to be honest. It is possible you may not be a fit at all based on those questions, and recruiters need a way to quickly shrink the candidate pool from a few hundred to a few dozen.

Jaime Chambron

Some employers have minimum qualifications that any candidate MUST have, so they include questions to make sure you meet those bare minimum expectations. If you don't, it will automatically reject you for the role and you will likely receive the "thanks but no thanks" note. It's ok to not have every skill that a position requires, but you do need to come in with that minimal level to qualify.

Brenda Mariah

Knockout questions are screening questions in online job applications to quickly identify and disqualify candidates who don’t meet the job's minimum qualifications. To avoid them, read each job posting carefully to ensure you meet the minimum qualifications before applying, answer the questions honestly, and take the time to make sure your resume accurately reflects your experience.

Cathy Lanzalaco

Normally, so-called "knockout questions" are simply the interviewer's attempt to eliminate candidates who do not meet the basic requirements for the position. These types of questions can involve, citizenship, possession of certain licenses or certifications, willingness to travel or relocate, degrees, years of experience, and so forth. As in all interviews, being truthful is the best strategy.

Grant Cooper

Knockout questions are pre-screening questions in online job applications designed to quickly disqualify candidates who don't meet basic requirements. To avoid being "knocked out," carefully review the job posting to ensure you meet qualifications and answer honestly.

Scott Gardner

Knockout questions are prescreening questions asked to assess basic requirements of applicants. Knockout questions are the non-negotiable qualifications, such as US citizenship, educational level, hours available to work, etc. Employers ask knockout questions to knock applicants who do not meet basic job qualifications, out of the pool of applicants.

Cheryl Minnick

Candidates can't avoid the knockout questions because they are typically required to apply for some jobs. Even using a connection in your network to apply may still require you to submit your resume through the ATS. Just be honest in your responses. It is best to be honest. Don't get caught in an interview facing questions about skills you claimed to have in your responses, but unable to justify.

Tammeca Riley



**How do I figure out what upskilling and reskilling I might need to remain competitive in the job market?**



To identify needed upskilling, monitor industry trends, analyze job postings, and network with professionals. Review online learning platforms and professional certifications that align with market demands. Stay competitive by focusing on skills that make you more versatile and valuable in your field.

Donna Tucker

Research what your ideal next job is requiring by reviewing job descriptions online to identify any missing skills. Ask for feedback from your current boss on areas to work on that will help the organization. See what certifications or trainings those in your ideal job have completed and outreach to them for informational interviews as well.

Jaime Chambron

Identify in-demand skills in your target industry by reviewing job postings and industry reports. You can also reach out to mentors or industry professionals to solicit feedback on potential skill and technology gaps. Upskill using platforms like LinkedIn Learning or Coursera to keep your skills relevant and stay competitive in this ever-changing job market.

Robert Rosales

Think about what you want to do next. Review job announcements. Upload to ChatGPT to identify a skills list. What is the gap between where you are and where you want to be? Which ones are attainable for you? Leverage LinkedIn Learning, YouTube, new certifications, or company-sponsored training. Trending skills across all industries: AI. Learn how to incorporate AI into your skillset.

Camille Roberts



**In my last interview, they asked which other companies I was interviewing with. How should I have answered?**



Consider providing general responses without specifically naming companies. For example, respond by stating, "similar companies in the industry" or "competitors." Offering information on how many other companies you are interviewing with is also another angle to consider. For example, respond by stating, "3 other competitors." These are acceptable and respected responses.

Tammeca Riley

Acknowledge that you are exploring other similar opportunities without getting into specifics while expressing your strong interest in the current opportunity. You can pull in a few key aspects of the role and why it appeals to you. This shows that you are a sought-after professional while positioning you as a motivated and interested candidate.

Deirdre Rock

Acknowledge the question without giving too much detail, "I am interviewing with a few other companies in the industry to find the right fit for my skills and career path. However, I am very excited about this opportunity because of [XYZ, ZYX, and ABC reasons]." Give two or three reasons why you are authentically drawn to their position.

Paula Christensen



**Because of my limited work experience and other issues, I struggle to find suitable references, as well as recommendations for LinkedIn. Do you have any suggestions?**



Look outside of work situations to source references by leveraging professors, mentors, or peers from volunteer work. For LinkedIn recommendations, ask for endorsements from classmates or project partners. Building strong relationships across a variety of fields will help you grow your network and increase your chances of obtaining valuable references and recommendations.

Tammy Shoup



**As a minority job seeker, how can I identify employers with a genuine commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?**



Start with their website. Is there inclusive imagery? Are they transparent about DEI policies? Dig deeper. Do they have DEI-related posts, events, or employee feedback on social media? The Human Rights Campaign publishes an annual corporate equality index that assesses companies' adoption of LGBTQ+ inclusion policies. Finally, use the interview to ask specific questions to gauge DEI commitment.

Kate Williamson

Many resources can be employed to determine if a company aligns with your values, such as its website, annual report, LinkedIn Premium, and Glassdoor. Review their policies and practices for creating a fair and equitable work environment; these should be transparent. Do they have a DEI Steering Committee? Seek out employee perspectives to gain insight into the company culture; always a true gauge.

Deidre Rock



**I've been offered the job. Now, I wonder how, when, and if I can negotiate salary. Can you help?**



Always negotiate! Negotiating your salary sets a precedence for future conversations. What if you're happy with the proposed salary? Negotiate for an extra week of vacation. Your employer needs to know that you understand your value. If you don't know where to begin, hire a coach to help build confidence. The truth is if you don't negotiate, someone else will get the salary you deserve.

Laura Bashore

While you may have dropped subtle hints throughout your interview process, your official negotiation typically begins upon receipt of your written offer. If you feel comfortable, you can do this over the phone. If not, using e-mail is perfectly fine. Please don't forget to negotiate your total compensation and not just your salary. If working with a recruiter, they may negotiate on your behalf.

Brenda Mariah

Always negotiate! I recommend checking out Salary.com to see what the range is for your role. Ask for what you believe you are worth and see if they will add 5-10% base pay and/or 2-5% additional bonus or equity. They may not be able to budge on the budgeted salary but could increase other incentives that are performance based.

Jaime Chambron

Know in advance what you need and say "Thank you so much for the offer. I'm very excited about the opportunity to join your team. Based on my research and the value I will deliver in this role; my goal is to discuss a salary closer to \$XX,XXX. What flexibility is there for your offer?" If they can't increase the salary, consider negotiating other aspects of the compensation package.

Jane Roqueplot



**I feel I was discriminated against in my last job interview. How do I legitimately identify if discrimination occurred and how can I prove it?**



Discrimination can be especially difficult to prove, so unless you have rock-solid proof, pursuing legal action may not yield results. You can contact an employment attorney for council, or even submit a complaint to the EEOC (assuming the company meets the federal criteria for protection). At minimum, report the incident to the company's HR dept. so there is a written record. Those can add up.

Brenda Mariah

Talk to an employment lawyer. However, consider this before filing a claim. Do you really want to work for an organization that discriminated against you? Discrimination lawsuits can take years. Word may spread that you filed a lawsuit, making other companies afraid to hire or even interview you. It may be better to move on and be glad that you did not take the wrong job.

Robin Schlinger

Determine if you feel you are a member of the protected classes covered by either state or federal law. If you are, assemble your documentation, including the job posting you applied to. Your documentation must show you were qualified for the job but treated less favorably than someone outside your protected class. An employment attorney is best qualified to determine the strength of your case.

Lisa Dupras



**What role does emotional intelligence play in the job search, and how can I showcase it?**



Emotional intelligence is a valuable skill for any role. From being a leader, to serving customers, to collaborating internally, every role today as an element of interaction with others. In a resume, you can show how you used empathy to turn around a project, retained an upset client, or drove change. Understand how you use this skill to drive specific outcomes you have achieved.

Jaime Chambron



**How can I professionally address concerns about potential discrimination against my natural hairstyle during job interviews or in the workplace?**



Understand your rights against hairstyle discrimination. When addressing concerns during an interview or in the workplace, focus on how your appearance, including your hairstyle, aligns with your professional demeanor and commitment to your role. Seek support from HR if necessary to ensure your rights are protected. Your hairstyle is a part of your professional image and should be respected.

Cathy Lanzalaco

Effective courses for action nontraditional hairstyles are: 1) research the workplace culture to determine what is acceptable, which can vary from company to company, or even by position, 2) if your hairstyle is on the border of acceptability, make every effort to ensure that it is neatly styled, and 3) if your hairstyle is clearly beyond acceptability, consider whether it is a good fit for you.

Grant Cooper

Networking happens anytime you initiate a meaningful conversation with someone you know or have just met. It's flexible. You can do it online and in person. Start by sharing your job search goals with friends and family. From there, you can branch out by attending events like conferences or career fairs or engaging virtually through LinkedIn or other social media.

Kate Williamson

The premise of "weak ties" theory is that infrequent, arms-length contacts are most likely to boost your job mobility, as opposed to your first-degree/strong contacts. Cast your networking net wide to yield optimal job search results. Get active on LinkedIn. Attend professional networking events. Reconnect with alumni groups to pitch your unique value proposition and land that next job!

Emily Christakis



#### **How do I conduct a serious job search while I am still working without jeopardizing my career?**



Job hunting while employed requires careful planning. Use personal time and resources for your search, network discreetly, and maintain strong performance at your current role. Schedule interviews outside work hours when possible, and update LinkedIn gradually to avoid raising suspicion.

Donna Tucker

Do not jeopardize your career by using a work desktop, laptop, phone, or Zoom for job search. If discovered, you may be charged with a company policy violation, theft of service, or breach of conflict of interest for misusing organizational resources. Schedule weekend, early morning, or evening hours for job search and to connect with your professional network. Save your PTO for interviews.

Cheryl Minnick

Be discreet in your job search. Avoid using company time or resources. Turn off LinkedIn profile change notifications. Use your personal email and phone for all applications. Network strategically, sharing your search only with trusted contacts. Schedule interviews outside work hours. Stay focused on your current job to maintain professionalism and safeguard your reputation.

Camille Roberts

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