

JOBSEEKER TIPS:

MYTHS AND REALITIES OF JOB SEARCHING

Takeaway Points

- A Professional Summary, rather than an Objective, can change the focus of your resume from “Here’s what I want to do” to “Here’s what I can do for you.”
- Don’t depend on the person reading the resume to determine your fit for the job. Today, technology can determine fit by scanning your resume for keywords.
- The job interview is not an interrogation. It’s a two-way street in which both sides ask substantive questions of the other.

By: Team Pongo

In the career world, we hear a lot of misconceptions about job-search strategies and tactics. It’s not surprising that so many of these myths are still floating around. Technology, cultural trends, and corporate values are changing faster than we can keep up. Here are some of today’s common myths and realities surrounding resumes, cover letters, and job interviews.

MYTH: You should describe your ideal job in your Objective so hiring managers can determine if you will be happy at their company.

REALITY: Hiring managers aren’t interested in what will make you happy. They want to know how you will make *them* happy by contributing to their organizations’ goals and objectives. Use your Objective to introduce who you are and how your education, experience, and skills will bring value to the employer. In fact, if you have an established track record in your chosen field, skip the Objective and start off with a Professional Summary instead. Remember, your resume is a marketing tool and the Objective or Professional Summary serves as your “personal mission statement.”

MYTH: Your resume should give plenty of details about all your past work experience to convince the employer to hire you.

REALITY: Your resume is supposed to get you an interview, not a job. It should give *relevant* information to show the value you’ve brought to other companies and can bring to another. The job of the resume is to intrigue and persuade the reader that it’s worth taking the time to interview you.

MYTH: An elaborate resume design with cool fonts will stand out from the crowd.

REALITY: It could, but probably not for the right reasons. Your resume layout should be visually pleasing, but clean enough to be readable when it’s copied, faxed, or e-mailed. And if you’re posting it to a job board, it will need to be in plain, unformatted text.

MYTH: The reader will be smart enough to realize that your experience is very close to what they’re looking for, even though your wording is a bit different.

REALITY: We live in the age of technology. The first “reader” of your resume may be a software application programmed to scan resumes for specific keywords. Resumes with high keyword counts rise to the top of the pile. To give your

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resume a better chance of being in that group, look at the job description for keywords and customize your resume to each employer’s wording. For non-specific resumes, search for and use standard terminology and common buzzwords from your industry.

MYTH: Nobody reads cover letters anymore, so there’s no point in sending one.

REALITY: It’s true that some hiring managers don’t read cover letters, but most still do (at some point). A well-written cover letter serves as the “warm-up act” for your resume, highlighting your strengths and enticing the hiring manager to look at your resume, which in turn can lead to an interview. A cover letter is also a writing sample that shows off your communication skills. Even if no one reads it, the fact that you bothered to write a cover letter gives the impression that, if hired, you’ll be willing to go the extra mile, that you pay attention to detail, and that you won’t submit a project with missing pieces.

MYTH: A look at the employer’s web site is good preparation for the interview.

REALITY: That’s just the tip of the iceberg. Don’t just look; *scrutinize* the web site! See what the company is all about, who the players are, what their concerns are, as well as who their customers and competitors are. Read the organization’s annual report and press releases. Search the web to see what else you can find out about them. Ask friends and contacts what they know. Do your homework and you’ll have an advantage, because most job seekers don’t bother to go that far.

MYTH: In a job interview, the employer holds all the power and you are at the mercy of their random questions.

REALITY: It should be a two-way street. In a good interview, the job candidate might ask as many questions as the interviewer asks, if not more. You can show that you’ve done your homework by asking something like, “Is this opening a result of your company’s recent expansion into the x market?” To get an idea of what skills to emphasize, you can ask, “What are the key qualifications needed to succeed in this position?” If you get nervous and start rambling, stop and ask, “Am I getting too detailed?” If you’re totally stumped, say, “I’m not sure how to answer. Can you clarify what you’re looking for?” Your questions will help you gain control and steer the conversation in a direction where you can shine. Show that you’re truly interested in the opportunity by asking questions.

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Did you know?

The Pongo ResumeBUILDER (www.PongoResume.com) provides you with all the tools you need to enhance your job search. You can build as many resumes as you like!

MYTH: The first thing you should ask about is salary and benefits, because if they're too low, there's no point in wasting your time.

REALITY: You'll have much more negotiating leverage if you can defer salary questions until the company really wants to hire you. Aim for a "don't ask, don't tell" policy in the beginning. However, you should always go into an interview knowing the typical salary range and benefits for similar positions in your area. If the salary isn't posted in the job listing or on the company's web site, you can find general salary information online by related job title and location of the job. If the salary question does come up before you've made your pitch for the job, be prepared to answer if pressed. If you're feeling assertive, try something like, "I realize that you need to be sure my expectations align with the range for this position. I'll be glad to confirm that if you will let me know the range." When you do answer, go for the high end of your range. "Based on my own experience and my research into local trends, I feel that the range of \$XX to XX would be a fair starting compensation. How does that align with the salary you've budgeted for this position?"

MYTH: The most qualified, most experienced, and most educated candidates always get the job.

REALITY: Getting hired is a matter of presenting yourself as the best solution to the employer's problem, which is an open position that's costing money, disrupting the flow of business, and forcing other employees to fill in the gap.

Convince them that you've got the right skills, the right attitude, and the right stuff to solve their problem, and your new "reality" will be a great job.

www.pongoresume.com

Pongo Resume is a premier full-service online resume-building resource that provides a suite of tools to help job seekers market and manage their career. Pongo generates over 100,000 resumes per month through its 4+ million registered users and has in excess of 1/2 million unique visitors per month. The company is privately held and headquartered in Northborough, Massachusetts.