



# Monster Mania

## Tips to Boost Your Job Search Potential

### Resume Tips

- My "official" job title is vague, how can I expand upon or clarify this on my resume? Search for your position title on Monster and see if there are other jobs out there with the same title as yours. This will give you an idea if you are using industry standard terms/titles. Also, create a summary of that experience that will utilize different keyword that is more specific to the job description.
- I'm considering switching careers; can you provide some additional insight into creating multiple resumes to highlight my transferable skills? Research is key to marketing your transferable skills to prospective employers. Do your homework by researching the organizations to which you're applying. In your resume, feature what you could do for them in the future, rather than what you've done in the past. A functional resume offers you the best opportunity to showcase skills rather than job experience; it's more of a forward-looking resume. The highlights or profile section at the top serves as a sort of editorial page where you can show the relationship between the kind of person you are and the job's demands. This section can be tailored to each prospective employer and position.
- Is it necessary to include an objective on a resume? A resume objective is a short, powerful statement that tells the employer what skills and experience you bring to the table as well as how you will be of value to their organization. Given that employers scan each resume at lightning speed before deciding whether to read on or not, the objective maximizes your opportunity to grab their attention. In short, it's an introduction that provides an instant sense of how you would fit into the advertised role. If it works properly, it will get your resume looked at more closely. Tip: be certain that each resume you submit has an objective in alignment with the advertised position or industry you are pursuing.
- What is the right balance between detailing accomplishments on a resume and yet keeping it interesting? Many times we add repetitive information or details, or information that is not very impactful, but may "look nice". Remember your resume is to highlight your summary and accomplishments. When we get away from attempting to write a job description and focus on summaries and accomplishments, it becomes much easier.
- My Masters degree and/or experience makes me overqualified for my current job search. Is it ok to leave it off my education or downplay my years of experience on my resume? Education is very important, and you worked hard to obtain your degree so you should not hide or downplay your accomplishment. Utilize the cover letter or resume summary/objective to give a compelling reason as to why you would want to take the position for which you are applying.



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- Should I use a professional resume service to help write my resume? Professional resume writing services are an excellent way to make your resume more attractive; however, remember you need to know what should be in your resume so that you can critique what they have written. Review article and resumes, attempt it yourself, and then reach out to resume writing professionals.
- There are gaps in my employment history and/or I've had multiple jobs in the past few years. How do I explain this on a resume and/or cover letter? Gaps in your employment or holding multiple jobs is can be explained in the resume itself, under the title in parenthesis (Reason for leaving: ..... ) or in your cover letter by simply stating, "I would like to explain the gaps in employment or reasons for multiple jobs." There is never harm in addressing the obvious questions as long as the explanation is tactful and professional. Remember...you don't have to give every detail.
- Is it appropriate to state that you will relocate on the resume? Are employers hesitant to recruit outside the immediate area of the job? If you are willing to relocate you should put that information in your cover letter with an explanation as to why. Also, if you are willing to pay for your relocation or if you are already planning to relocate to that area for personal reasons then be sure to explain in further detail. Relocations are still available for some positions, and depends on the specific company, job, need, and your experience; however, it is harder to receive than it may have once been in the past.
- How important is a cover letter? A cover letter is very important. The purpose of a cover letter is to pique employers' interest so they want to interview you. A cover letter should emphasize your strongest qualifications, focusing on what you can contribute and how this contribution will benefit the employer.
- Should community involvement (volunteering) be included on a resume? What about faith based membership/leadership? You can show the way you stay connected by including your volunteer work but avoid giving too much detail. If you are using some type of professional skill set be sure to highlight it, i.e. sales, accounting, operations, management, etc. You want to show case your volunteer expertise in a professional "light".



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- I'm a recent college graduate with no experience. How do I build my resume to tell my "story?" It's a catch-22: You want a job to gain experience, but you can't find a job because previous experience is required. Don't be discouraged. You can still put your best foot forward and have a shot at the job. Describe courses, school projects, internships, extracurricular activities and volunteer work that are relevant to your career goal. In other words, areas where you have a lot of passion and interest. Focus on experience you have had, and craft them into a message that would translate into a professional environment. If you've ever been in a position of responsibility, provide details and examples on your resume to show you are reliable and trustworthy. Write about leadership responsibilities that you've had and completion of assignments for which you were selected over your peers. If you have work experience you can mention your perfect attendance record, additional duties assigned to you because of your excellent performance, and experience training new employees.
- I have a very skills specific resume and a 2-page keyword addendum, however, still no hits. My resume is very good, but nothing I do seems to catch the attention of recruiters. What should I do differently? Whether you're writing your first resume or updating an existing one, stop and think about which keywords you need to add. You could be the most qualified person for the position, but yours will be lost in a sea of resumes without the right ones. Through diligent research and sound judgment calls, you can maximize your resume's keyword density and improve your chances of getting noticed by studying job postings. This is the best way to determine important keywords. You will be able to get into the mind of employers who literally spell out what they're looking for in job postings. Review several job advertisements for your ideal position. The jobs don't have to be in your geographic target area. The idea is to find skills, experience, education and other credentials important in your field. You will probably find keywords frequently mentioned by different employers. Focus on the "requirements," "skills" or "qualifications" sections of job ads, and look for industry buzzwords and desirable credentials for your job objective. The best way to use the keywords once you find them is to relate them back to your past position, weaving them into your resumes and do away with the 2-page keyword addendum.

### Interviewing

- What's the best way to follow-up with a company/recruiter once you've applied for one of their jobs? If you have the contact information of the recruiter or hiring manager, you could place a call to them or email them to mention that you've applied to their position, to verify that they've received it and to reiterate your interest in the opportunity. At times this can be challenging, though, because most times job seekers are submitting their information through a website – either a job board (such as Monster) or directly through the company's career pages and there is not a specific contact name. Job seekers should also ask their own network of contacts if they know anyone who works in that particular company. This could be helpful in identifying who the appropriate person is to contact in that company to follow up on the position.



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- What tips do you have for standing out in a telephone interview to ensure I will move on in the hiring process? In a telephone interview situation, the job seeker is not able to use body language to convey enthusiasm or non-verbal cues such as nodding to affirm what the interviewer is saying. It is important in a telephone interview to be upbeat and personable and enthusiastic. Even smiling when you talk can convey your enthusiasm. One benefit to telephone interviewing is the fact that the job seeker can have information laid out in front of them such as prepared answers to questions that might be asked. The job seeker can glance at this and use it as reference to answer the question. As well, the job description can be used as a reference to illustrate to the employer the skills and experiences the job seeker has that match up to what the employer is seeking. Conveying enthusiasm and being prepared are key to establishing that the job seeker is a viable candidate to be considered further in the interviewing process.
- Is it necessary to send a "thank you" letter to employer/recruiter even if you don't get a call back or confirmation of getting the job? It should be standard practice to send a thank you correspondence to anyone who interviews you. This is not only a professional courtesy, it is also an opportunity for you to reiterate your interest in the position as well as again highlight some of your particular strengths relative to what the employer is seeking. If you are notified that someone else has been offered the job, a thank you correspondence can be an opportunity to express interest in future openings with the company.
- After you've sent the thank you note, how long should you wait to follow-up with a phone call? A week is an appropriate amount of time to follow up. If you reach the person involved in the hiring process, the follow up phone call is also a good opportunity to establish what the timeline is to make decisions, schedule follow-up interviews, etc. Ask that person if it would be acceptable to continue to follow up and at what frequency. This establishes the expectation that you are engaged in the process, very interested in the position and the person at the company will be expecting your follow up calls or emails.
- How can I overcome my fear of interviews? Preparation is key in overcoming the fear of interviewing. The best way to prepare for an interview is to have a thorough understanding of what the employer is seeking. Use the job description for this. Then, take inventory of the work you've done in the past and the accomplishments you've made that tie directly to what the employer is seeking. Be prepared to talk about specific scenarios that you encountered at work that illustrate how these experiences can benefit the employer and the role they're looking to fill. Also, practice answering possible interview questions out loud. Enlist the help of a trusted friend or family member to conduct a mock interview with you. This will get you comfortable with answering questions and talking about yourself. Practicing in this manner makes it okay to stumble over words in a "safe" environment. The goal is to use that time to make your mistakes and improve each time thereby making you much more prepared and comfortable for the real interview.



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- I've applied to a lot of jobs. What if someone calls you to discuss an opportunity and they don't say who they are at first? How do you ask what job they are calling about without sounding unprepared? Simply state to the caller "Thank you so much for contacting me. May I ask your name and what company you are with? I'd like to take some notes about the opportunity we're about to discuss".
- I did not get along with my former employer. What should I say if I'm asked why I left my position? It is a good idea to focus on the contributions you made to the organization and what you are hoping to accomplish in your next position. An appropriate response to that question would be "I am looking to build upon my experiences and accomplishments from my former position in my next role. Although my time at "x" company was valuable, I am looking for an opportunity where I can further utilize my talents".

### Networking

- When you are new to an area, what's the best way to build a network? Whether you are new to an area or just beginning to realize how important it is to have a network established in times of career change, it all starts the same way -- communication and not "assuming" anything! Everyone is a potential contact. Everyone has a friend and those friends have friends and those other friends just might be your next employer. Start building your network today. Don't be afraid of telling people what you want and asking for referrals. If you are like most people, deliberate, successful networking is not something you were born knowing how to do. It is a skill, and like any other skill it takes practice and discipline. You owe it to yourself to learn as much as possible about networking and understanding the doors that it can open for you. There are many books available on the subject, such as *Monster Careers: Networking*. Also, Monster's Career Advice Center has many articles on the topic to help further educate yourself on the subject. Whichever educational channel you chose...please start learning TODAY how to network at your best.
- After researching the company, you realize the position and/or organization are not a good fit. Should I still attend the interview? In a short answer, yes. Why? In this tough labor market environment we are in currently, it is best to think outside the box and say "no" to no one. Although researching companies prior to your interview is extremely important, you will never know what "you don't know" unless you talk with the internal recruiters, HR Managers, Hiring Managers, etc. You need to gather all the facts and ask the appropriate questions before making a final decision. Also, you never know who you might meet on these interviews who you could potentially add to your professional network. You may not be the right fit for their position, but they may give you suggestions beyond your current knowledge as well.



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### Changing Careers

- When is the best time to change careers? No one can tell you when the best time is to change careers – everyone has their own story and their own life circumstances and the decision should be made carefully and with thorough self-assessment of skills, financial situation and intense introspection. It could be the best decision of your life, but don't do it without going through the research phase and do not expect to change overnight. A thorough career change usually will take a minimum of six months to pull off, and the time frequently stretches to a year or more. If you work for a company with many different departments, changing careers may not have to be so drastic. Consider taking steps to move into a new line of work within your current company. By identifying what you do and do not like about your current situation and being proactive about discovering what would make you happy, you can rejuvenate your career by redefining it.
- What is your advice on getting a job in a field well outside of your educational background? There is no right or wrong path if you choose the path of your passion. If you just graduated with a four year degree in Entomology (Study of Bugs) and at the end of your four years of schooling, you never want to see another bug again, than it would be wise to consider another path. Some companies do "require" that the candidates have a particular focused degree, but they are usually limited to specialties such as medicine, law, accounting, top level corporate positions. As a whole however, the specific degree is not as important as having "a degree", passion and experience you bring to the table.

### Background Checks

- Why would an employer conduct a credit or background check? An employer will conduct a credit check to review your ability to manage your finances, particularly if the job involves finance, accounting, cash or valuable merchandise. How you manage your finances will often be an indicator as to how you are going to manage the companies' resources. If your credit is poor or you've filed bankruptcy, be ready to provide interviewers with a short, contrite explanation and to redirect the conversation to one of your strengths as well as to a reference who can back up your story. If a company has requested a background check they are looking for criminal activity in your background.
- How often do employers do background checks? How many years do they go back to conduct these background checks? Most employers will conduct some type of background check. Small businesses, may wave this step in the hiring process. The background check is going back 7-10 years based on the initial state employment law.



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- Can a company perform a background check before an interview? It is illegal for an employer to run a background check before extending an offer.
- If a credit or background check is required, how do I defend a poor credit history or criminal conviction? What can you say when you're asked about poor credit? Your best bet is to keep your answer short, sweet and sincere. Acknowledge the error of your ways. Assure the employer that there was a one-time problem and you've changed. For instance, you might say: "I came from humble beginnings, and when I went away to college, I'd never had any experience with credit. I got overextended, and that was wrong, but I learned a lesson and worked hard to pay off all my debts. Since then, I've had clean credit and I hope this won't hold me back, because I really want to work for your company." If you are turned down for a job because of credit problems, the employer has to give you a copy of the report and explain your rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act. When completing job applications that ask about your conviction record, you must be honest. Select "yes" when asked if you have been arrested, and in the section that asks you to provide the details, write something like "will explain in interview."
- How important are references? Should I use subordinates or previous co-workers as references? References are very important. They allow your potential new employer to verify what you have told them about your work experience, accomplishments, etc. It's good to have a mix of references; a former manager you reported to directly and co-workers. If you are applying for a manager position it is a good idea to have a reference from one of your subordinates; this will give an indication of your management abilities.
- How can I find co-workers if they are no longer with my former employer? Search for former co-workers on social networking sites, professional sites, and reach out to other previous co-workers that you may not have intended to use as a reference, but that might have an idea of where you could find them.

### Monster Site

- What is Monster's privacy policy? How can I protect my identity? Monster is committed to protecting the privacy of our users, and strives to provide a safe, secure user experience. Monster's full Privacy Policy can be reviewed at <http://my.monster.com/privacy/default.aspx>. This Privacy Statement sets forth the online data collection and usage policies and practices that apply to the Monster web site.



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- What percentage of people find jobs using Monster.com and the tools you offer? Great question and one that it not easy to answer for a couple of reasons. First, many employers track candidates through the hiring cycle using systems that are external to Monster. The majority of companies do not report back to Monster with the total number of hires made from using our services. Secondly, while some job seekers share their stories with us, unfortunately this is a small percentage of the total Monster Members.
- What "best practices" do you recommend to elevate hits on your resume when a recruiter runs a search on monster.com? Recruiters perform thousands of keyword searches on Monster's resume database daily. Of course, you want your resume to show up when appropriate. The problem is that there's no magical list of perfect keywords for your job objective. Through diligent research and sound judgment calls, you can maximize your resume's keyword density and improve your chances of getting noticed.
- It is important in my field to expose your style (design) on your resume. Monster doesn't offer an option to upload pdf's so how can I accommodate my need for a creative resume that I can post on Monster? It's easy to understand your dilemma. You are a graphic designer, so a resume is a chance to show your skills in a tasteful manner. Keep in mind, however, the information on the resume in the end is the most important part. When using an online job board, seekers are commonly limited to uploading a Word doc or creating a text version of a resume. Employers know this. Monster does allow you some degree of flexibility with the font and color(s) you choose. But be careful not to overdo it. Focus on your technical skills and experience to impress potential employers, then show up at the interview with a memorable resume that demonstrates your creativity.
- Spanish is my primary language. Does Monster have jobs posted in other languages? Monster is a Global company and has sites in over 50 different countries. When posting jobs, Employers use the primary language for that country as it is the most appropriate to the target audience. In North America, English is the primary language so the job opportunities posted on Monster are predominantly written in English.



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### Other

- When is the appropriate time to discuss salary? Many job descriptions state the desired salary must be stated in cover letter; what's the best way to address this? Establishing a realistic salary range that reflects your actual income requirements is important. Once you've done that, the whole process of finding a job becomes much easier, because you know how low you can go and can eliminate prospective jobs that fall outside your range. You need to do some research to come up with your realistic salary range. Take a hard look at your living expenses. Which are fixed? Which are variable? Which are discretionary? Once you've determined your salary requirements to keep body and soul together, make that the bottom of your salary range, and add \$10,000 to that number to establish the top of your range. Some argue that you should add \$20,000 to establish the top of your range, but where you put that top amount depends on how willing and able you are to negotiate once an offer is made. Now, if you're asked to provide salary information as part of the application process, you can do it without worrying about pricing yourself out of the market or grabbing a job that won't pay the bills.
  - Other Considerations:
    - Verify the job's scope before you talk about salary. It is difficult to discuss compensation before you have sufficient information about the position and level of responsibility.
    - Research the job market before the interview to give you an idea of what the position is worth. You should know the going rate for the same position for a person with your experience and skills. A wealth of information can be obtained through Monster's [Salary Wizard](#), which offers regional salary ranges for a wide variety of positions.
    - Consider the timing. Depending on where you are in the interview process, it is best to delay giving your salary history or expectations until you are sure of the employer's interest.
    - Be prepared to reveal your past salary or history at some point in the interview process. By postponing the discussion, you have more control. Once you feel there is a sincere interest or an offer is forthcoming, you will be on firmer ground to discuss compensation.
- What should I do if the pay scale for the job is less than my salary requirement? You will want to evaluate what is most important to you. Is it the role, the responsibilities, growth, or job satisfaction? If all those elements are there, salary may not be as important. However, only you can determine what salary level is acceptable to you and you will have to make that decision according to your personal situation.



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- Does it reflect poorly on an applicant to apply to different positions in the same company? Not necessarily but the job seeker should have good reason. An acceptable reason for this would be if the seeker has skills and experience that qualify them for a variety of positions. The problem surfaces when the job seeker is perceived as a "serial poster" applying for anything and everything. A good rule-of-thumb is to make recruiters or hiring managers aware that you've applied for other openings if you get contacted for an interview. This shows that you're up front and honest and will prevent problems down the road if you were to end up with multiple offers. It's best to keep everyone informed.
- Is it better to look for a job on your own or to use a recruiter? If you have 20+ years of experience? It is a good idea to use a variety of avenues to search for your next position. Using a job board such as Monster.com allows you to search and apply for positions on your own, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There will be many jobs posted there that have not been given to headhunters to fill. You will also want to engage with your personal and professional network to make them aware that you are seeking a new role, what you have to offer and asking them for referrals of people they know connected to the work you seek. Finally, a headhunter or recruiter is also a viable means to be presented with opportunities that are not widely advertised.
- I'm an older worker. Any suggestions to help me find a job? Professional networking is about making contacts and building relationships that can lead to jobs or other work-related opportunities. Thoughtful networking provides a focused way to talk to people about your job search. Done right, it can help you obtain leads, referrals, advice, information and support. It is an essential component of any successful job search, but it requires calculated planning. The good news for older job seekers is that by virtue of more years and more experiences, you generally have an edge over your younger counterparts in the scope of your networks.