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Many Students Don't Have the Resume and Interview Skills to Actually Get Hired

Have I really eliminated applicants because their resume was too stupid-looking to contemplate? Yes. That's what the delete button and the shredder next to my desk are for.

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Who is advising undergraduates and recent grads on resume writing and interview skills today? I am dead serious about this. I just got off the phone with a woman who was providing a reference for an intern we're about to hire, and she and I got joking about how bad the new resumes look, and how we toss out the ones that are too hideous to even consider.

Since she's in academia, I asked her what is going on -- it's getting worse and less professional every single year. Her answer completely cracked me up.

"I think they're telling them 'make your resume stand out' and they're interpreting that as USE GLITTER!" says Amanda Horne, Director of Student Engagement at Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas. I think she's absolutely right. Thank God the resumes arrive online

now, or I'd be opening up glitter bombs left and right. Immediate disqualification from the internship, by the way.

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She's not far off. So far this year, I have received a myriad of hideous resumes from mostly excellent candidates. Have I really eliminated applicants because their resume was too stupid-looking to contemplate? Yes. That's what the delete button and the shredder next to my desk are for. But the resume has to really stand out as tacky and unacceptable before we go that route.

Sometimes, if we really like some of what we're seeing, we'll email back for more information and see what comes back before the resume goes to File 9 (for those of you kids who don't know the expression -- "File 9" or the "circular file" means the trash).

Yes, I know I publicly express my opinion that pink is my favorite color on a regular basis in my social media, but you are applying for a job with my company. Do not send me a pink resume. Do not put pink swirls on a white resume. And for God's sake, use black ink for the text of your resume, NOT PINK!

Regardless of your graphic abilities on the computer, resist the urge to do anything other than a plain white background for your resume, UNLESS, you are applying for a graphic design or other creative job that would expect to receive a ridiculous-looking resume. I just want the facts. Where did you go to school? When do you/did you graduate? What did you major in? And how did you spend your non-class time in a way that would be beneficial to my company?

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Some very important tips for internship and job seekers:

- Do include ALL of your current contact information -- yes, we get resumes with no contact info on them, as though we think your spectacularly-designed resume makes it worth going back to wherever you applied from (www.internships.com is popular) to find out how to get in touch with you. I'm also not going to your website to find your contact info.

- Be specific about your education and the years you studied each place. If you haven't graduated, or aren't currently in school, don't hide that fact. We're not morons and we can tell -- it might not disqualify your application if you're honest about it. If you do have a degree, for God's sake advertise it, and when you got it or when you plan to graduate. You can also use your cover letter to explain a less-than-traditional educational path.

- Skip the high school information, UNLESS, you are tailoring your resume for a specific employer who might have a connection to you through that educational institution. I occasionally get resumes that reference my own high school, Georgetown Visitation, in Washington, D.C. And whether it's true or not, I'd like to think it's because the applicant did their homework. That doesn't always turn out to be true, but I give them the benefit of the doubt pre-interview. Regardless, listing any high school from my home town isn't a bad idea if you've done enough homework to be targeting that at me for a reason. If you're just listing your high school on every resume because you haven't got enough to fill a page, you have a problem. You can list awards and recognition received in high school without detailing your high school career. No matter how accomplished or brilliant you are, we don't want to see a three-page resume that's basically creative writing.

- Do not hide your organizational affiliations. If you are in a fraternity or sorority, advertise that you are Greek. Especially highlight the responsibilities that you held. A lot of business owners and hiring decision-makers were in the Greek system, too, and they understand the commitment and responsibility that goes along with it. Recently, we've encountered resumes from accomplished young women who were actually concealing their Greek roots, so to speak. We only picked up on it because of the charity work and some other things listed on her resume that indicated she had not only been in a sorority, but an officer and an active participant. I told my account exec Kelsi Welch (who is a Tri Delt alum from Colorado) to email the applicant back and tell her to send us her Greek version of her resume, because that was the sort of experience we were looking for.

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- If you're an athlete, and that's why your resume is slim in the other activities department, that's okay -- just show that and explain in your cover letter. Being a member of a college athletic team or a Big Ten marching band is a huge feather in your cap that shows you can be punctual, committed and play well with others. Show that off -- who cares if it has nothing to do with your business or tourism major. Especially if your grades weren't so hot because you spent more time on your sport than academics. I get it. I was busier with the college newspaper than classwork.

- Do your homework on the company you're applying to if it's not a blind submission. Sometimes you don't have that option, but when you do, you should use it to your advantage as much as possible. Let me give you an example that's completely real and probably terrible to admit. I am an alum of The Ohio State University, and I am a proud Buckeye. Anybody who has been to the SandyMalone.com or

weddingsinvieques.com website can figure that out. If you are applying for a job with me, then I expect you to have done your homework on the basics of my company. That means, you should be sure to include an apology for having attended the University of Michigan (a fine educational institution) in your cover letter if you want me to get past that first "Education" line on your resume. Am I kidding? Maybe. But do you want to take that chance? If the situation were reversed, I'd definitely apologize for kicking their asses in football constantly in my cover letter applying to somebody at Michigan. Just sayin'.

The place for creativity is in your resume's cover letter. Not in the body of your actual resume. Erika Guevara, an intern here last fall, got our attention immediately with a cover letter written like a wedding invitation. It was HILARIOUS.

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"I can and will do all and more than what is expected *for better or for worse*." And she wrapped up with the following:

"I look forward to *a happily ever after* as an intern with the Weddings in Vieques team. Please *R.S.V.P.*"

How could we not interview her? She had just graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University and she did a fantastic job as a wedding planning intern. We're proud to call her a member of our WIV alumni crew! But for real, that cover letter was a great way to guarantee her invitation to interview.

While we're talking about getting interviews, let's talk about how to prepare yourself for an interview if you get that far in the application

process.

Your job is to do your homework BEFORE the interview. If you know that you're applying for a job on a Caribbean island, research that island ahead of talking with the potential employer. And if you make it through the first round of the interview process and know you're at the final, decision-making point -- do not sink yourself by asking the CEO of the company stupid questions that you should already know the answer to.

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My account exec, Kelsi gives me her final picks to interview, and she preps them because she wants them to do well. She tells them where to find my website, my blogs, clips of *Wedding Island* on TLC. Hey, we want these candidates to know exactly what they're signing up for -- good, bad and ugly. She literally spoon feeds it to them -- "Go learn about Sandy before you do your interview." But do they listen to her? Only about half of the time.

I'm not [Donald Trump](#) or Bill Gates, and unless you're a reality TV junkie, you probably don't know me other than from my wedding blogs in [the Huffington Post](#). But, theoretically if you want to grow up and be a wedding planner and you're hoping to intern for me, you've done just the slightest bit of research on me BEFORE we have our interview. I even recently wrote a blog about internships that resulted in a slew of applications. I just wish they'd read [this blog](#) first.

Just last night I had to eliminate an applicant for stupidity during her interview. I asked her my standard first question: "Why do you want to come down to this little island and sweat your butt off planning weddings this summer?"

Her answers were great (almost too scripted) and then she started volunteering information that she never should have offered. She said she really admired me and the work I do, but that she's never read my blogs or checked out my social media. Hmm. I read your resume and crept your social media, you should have checked out mine. After all, you're hoping I hire YOU. Duh.

The kicker came at the end of the interview when I asked her if she had any additional questions about the internship or its requirements. Pretty specific question, right? Her response to me was this: "I see you were in politics fairly recently, how did you become a wedding planner?"

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No, seriously. Really? I think you misunderstand who is interviewing who here. At first, I started out politely explaining my background, but common sense kicked in when she asked follow ups and I finally told her that all of this information is readily available on my personal web site, my company site and TLC's site -- so I wasn't going to spend time telling her all about me during my interview with her. And I re-asked the same question and she didn't have any questions about the actual internship.

Then I did something I thought might be mean, but Kelsi tells me it's what the applicants need to hear. And since she graduated a year ago, I trust her judgment. I told the interviewee that the next time she made it to the final round of an intern application process and was given time to talk with the CEO, it would behoove her to do her homework in advance. I may not be some famous mogul that you know by name, but I am the woman who decides whether to hire

you, and signs that stipend check at the end of the internship, if you survive it.

My only conclusion is that nobody is properly coaching today's undergraduates on resume format and how to do an interview. Sure, there are endless articles and blogs on it (just like this one), but they're either not reading them, or they don't care. If they don't care, that's a bigger problem. But for the ones who really, really do want to obtain gainful employment, it's time to get your acts together. If you're a parent of a job-hunting kid, maybe you should take a look at their resume if you haven't been actively involved. Somebody has got to guide these job applicants. They need help.

No video cover letters, no pink swirly backgrounds, no blind interview when you could have known everything about me, including my dog's name. I mean, for real, if you could spend \$15 on [Amazon](#) to see where you're thinking about working, and who you are considering working for, wouldn't you do it? I'm amazed by the number of applicants who haven't seen "Wedding Island" on TLC at all. They know about it but haven't done their homework on the business. C'mon, we can't make it any easier than that. What is wrong with kids today?

I could go on forever with more little nuggets of advice, like don't put your picture on your resume and don't use your roommate as a reference, but I'm going to save those for another blog. This is more than enough for the average applicant to absorb in one day. I just truly hope they're reading it.

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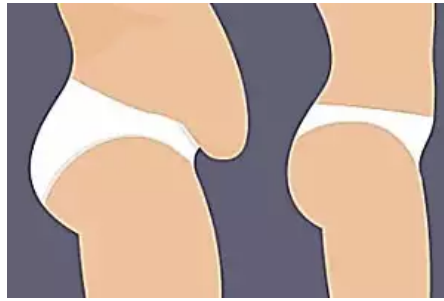
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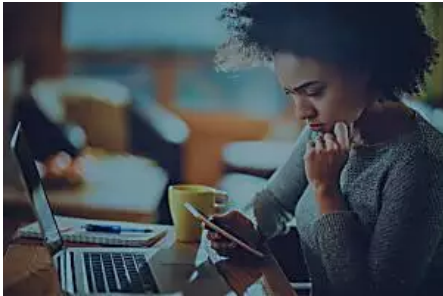
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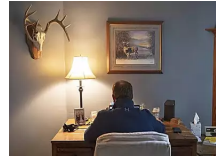
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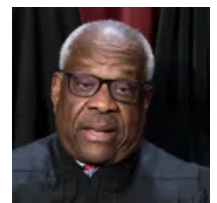
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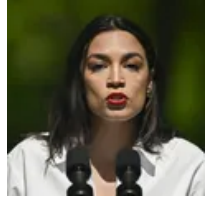
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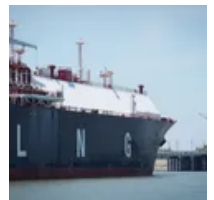
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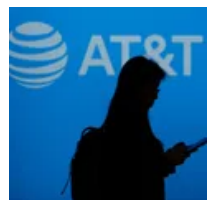
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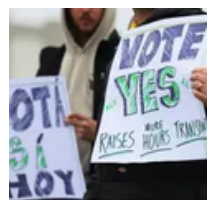
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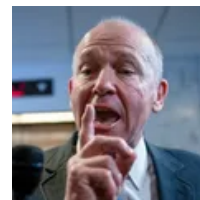
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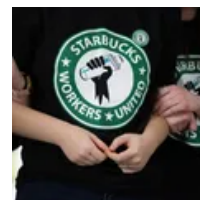
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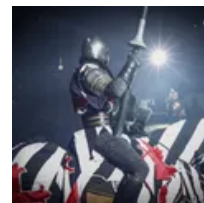
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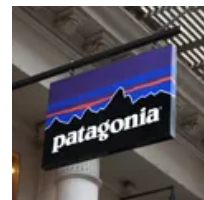
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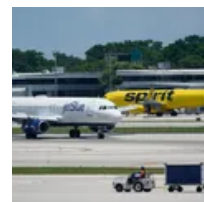
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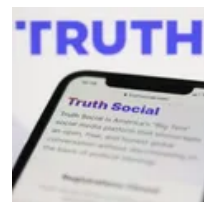
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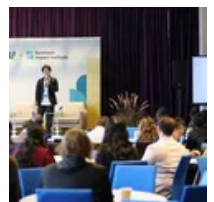


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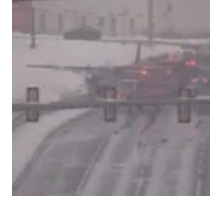
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