

## **How to Fail at the Job Search: Seven Simple Mistakes You May Be Making**

*By Robert Half International*

Are you inadvertently sabotaging your job search? No matter how skilled or experienced you are, a few easy-to-make mistakes can get in your way. A single typo on your resume, for example, may cause hiring managers to question your professionalism and attention to detail, undermining your many professional accomplishments. Put simply, even one wrong move can cancel out all the right ones you've made.

Here are seven common job search mistakes and how to avoid them:

- 1. Keeping your search to yourself.** If no one knows you're looking for a new job, you may inadvertently be extending the length of your search. Talking with your family, friends and acquaintance is one of the best ways to identify new professional contacts and learn about job openings, even those that aren't advertised. Professional networking websites such as LinkedIn.com are also good avenues. In fact, [62 percent](#) of executives interviewed by Robert Half believe professional networking websites will prove useful in the search for job candidates in the next three years. Moreover, 35 percent of respondents cited social networking sites — such as Facebook or Myspace — as recruiting resources they plan to tap. Remember that the larger your network, the more job openings you will hear about.
- 2. Not doing your research.** More than [three-quarters](#) of executives polled by Robert Half said job candidates they meet with display at least some knowledge of the company or industry. If you're not part of this majority, you're doing yourself a disservice. Applicants who uncover beyond-the-basics knowledge of the job and company are better able to

communicate specific ways they can contribute to the organization's success. Peruse corporate websites, trade publications and local business journals, and check in with members of your network, to gain insights into the firm's challenges, opportunities, culture and values.

3. **Flooding the market with an untargeted resume.** Online job boards have made it easy for applicants to apply for a position with the simple click of the mouse. But don't blindly blast your resume to every company you come across. Hiring managers seek tailored resumes that tie a job seeker's unique skills and abilities to the requirements of the position. Take the extra time and effort to customize your application materials to each opportunity; any information you gathered during your research can prove particularly valuable here.
4. **Neglecting the cover letter.** Not including a cover letter with your resume — even when you've applied for a job online — is passing up an opportunity to market your skills. In a survey by Robert Half, [86 percent](#) of executives said cover letters are valuable when evaluating job candidates. A cover letter allows you to explain in greater detail the specific ways in which your expertise can benefit the firm.
5. **Failing to proofread.** Be mindful of spelling and grammar in your resume and cover letter. [Eighty-four percent](#) of executives surveyed by Robert Half said it takes just one or two typographical errors to remove a candidate from consideration for a job opening. Make sure all of your written communication with a potential employer, including e-mails and thank-you notes, are error free. To avoid this mistake, consider asking a detail-oriented friend to review your job search materials before submitting them.

6. **Searching on your employers' time.** If you are currently employed, it can be tempting to surf the Web for job openings at work. But doing so can quickly land you in hot water. Many companies monitor employees' web use, and if your boss discovers you're using work hours to search for a new opportunity, you can jeopardize your job. Any activity related to your job search, including scheduling interviews and completing application materials, should be completed on your own time.
7. **Failing to follow up with hiring managers.** If you've applied for a job and haven't heard back, it's foolish to assume the position has been filled or you are not right for the role. Your resume may simply have gotten lost in the flood of other applications. [Eighty-two percent](#) of executives surveyed by Robert Half said candidates *should* contact hiring managers — whether by e-mail, a phone call or a personalized letter — within two weeks of submitting a resume.

One final word of caution: An extended job search can put pressure on you to accept any offer that comes your way, but do your best to avoid taking a position that may cause more heartache than happiness. You may have to accept a less-than-perfect role in certain situations, but don't feel guilty holding out for a position with maximum appeal if you have the financial means to do so.

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