



Resume Sabotage? Top 5 Fails & Their Fixes (Part 2 of 3)

Season 3, Episode 2

***transcripts are for reference only and created with AI, no editing is done*

Transcript

Speaker 1:

<Silence> Welcome to Asking for Good a podcast for people who want to make a difference. Hear stories from seasoned non-profit professionals and volunteers on how to begin or further a career in making the world a better place.

Speaker 2:

Hi, I'm Katie Zer, a career fundraiser dedicated to making not-for-profit sector. Better.

Speaker 3:

We are back with Emily Chris, whose human resources career spanned the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. She's currently a career coach and a nationally certified resume writer. She's one of fewer than 75 people in the nation that have this credential. In our last episode, Emily told us we're not ready to write a resume if we don't have a North star for our career. We talked about elements of the modern job search, including using AI tools, and today Emily's gonna jump into the first resume on record and why resumes fail. Welcome back, Emily.

Speaker 4:

Thanks for having me back. Katie, I'm excited to dig into a topic that I love. I am a resume geek and I, I love, I love sort of helping people craft those, that branded career marketing document that gets you interviews by grabbing the recruiter and hiring manager's attention, because that is essentially what a resume is. I, I did wanna reference that. Yes. As you shared the first recorded in recorded history, the first resume was written in 1482 at the ripe age of 30, Leonardo da Vinci, the Renaissance polymath. He wrote a letter. He was looking for a job like all of us. You know, he was a genius, but he still needed a job. And he wrote out a very eloquent, very flowery letter that essentially listed all of his capabilities, and he sent it off to, at the time he was the regent, and he later became the Duke of Milan.

Speaker 4:

What was, while this letter Katie was written over 500 years ago, the message and the style of writing. Now, I don't recommend the flowery, eloquent language that Da Vinci wrote and, and used, but what he did do is it was written completely in the you voice, meaning he, he spelled out, he called out the number one fear that kept the duke up at night, which is wars and rumors of wars. And he talked about, he actually listed out 11 things that he could do for Milan. And, you know, the first nine all dealt with him helping him win wars, such as knowing how to build, quote unquote mortars most convenient and easy to carry. And with those I can fling small stones, almost resembling a storm. And then he goes on and on, like, you know, 11, listing out 11 things he could do during times of war to win wars.

Speaker 4:

And then the last two dealt more with during times of peace. He, he even wrote, you know, this is a direct quote, I know how when a place is besieged to take the water out of the trenches and make endless variety of bridges, and then it goes on and on and on. But, but at the end, it's, it was all about addressing the Duke's needs, the problems he was grappling with. And if you, if you take nothing away else from today's podcasts about sort of resume fails and, and things to do to win, you know, take, take DaVinci's approach. Write, write your resume with the intention of alleviating and addressing the pain points that the hiring manager is grappling with at this very moment. And put that hiring manager's, you know, sort of anxiety if you will, at ease by targeting all of those achievements and your accomplishments and your skills and the knowledge that you bring to the table. All of this culminates in all the ways that you can help solve the problems that keep the hiring manager up at night.

Speaker 3:

That's a great example. And the format has worked for ages now, then for decades and centuries. So I can do this for you to solve your problem. That's awesome. Now, I know you've prepared five and a half reasons why resumes fail. Are you ready to jump into those?

Speaker 4:

Absolutely, Katie. Let, let's jump right in. So, number five, poor layout. I can't tell you how many resumes are sort of, that they have that very cluttered look and feel. They're crammed with content characterized by very long sentences. There's multiple columns, there's very little white space. And essentially what ends up happening, you know, people forget Katie, that yes, you know, the machine, the applicant tracking system's going to parse and review your resume probably first, but, but don't forget that your resume should still be visually appealing and skimmable, right, easy for the human reader to make sense of the content. And, you know, there's something called the polka dot resume. I see those a lot where there's like this overuse of bullets, Katie, to sort of organize and present the information. There's other ways to do that. Other ways to sort of segment your content to, so that way there's natural flows and natural buckets of information.

Speaker 4:

And you know, the things like section headers, job headers, that helps using strategic use of bold and color to draw the human eye sort of draw the eye down the page. There's this really fascinating eye tracking study that took place. It was led by the ladders and they did this a few years ago, and they actually tracked the amount of time that recruiters spend on a resume. And then they looked at when they were, say, on the six seconds that they spent on your resume, Katie, where did their eye spend the most time? And the study essentially showed that in contrast to the poor layout, what you need to do is have very clear, simple layouts that have clearly marked section and title headers, you know, clean fonts, simple ones, don't get too crazy with very cursive and the, sort of the more fancier fonts, if you will, stick to more simple ones. And layouts this was the most fascinating part for me reading it, that the layouts that took advantage of f and e pattern reading tendencies those were the ones that did the best. So sort of like less justified. Again, clear job titles, clear section headers, strategic use of bold, those were the ones that did the best

Speaker 3:

Poor layout won't be made up for by machine reading of your resume. Eventually a human is gonna look at this and eventually that human is gonna be your supervisor. If you've laid out your information in a way they can easily digest it.

Speaker 4:

Absolutely. Yeah. And people forget that. Remember that the human's gonna ultimately read it. It's ultimately going to be the, the human that passes on or rejects your, your resume. This is not, not the, the tracking system. There's ways to sort your information, there's ways to score your resume against the job posting, but ultimately the human's gonna make the final cut. So you wanna remember that and, you know, make it pretty, make it visually appealing. It's your marketing brochure about who you are and the problems you're great at solving. So that's number five.

Speaker 3:

That's great. We'll include that report about the e pattern and the f pattern in the show notes on the website. So what's number four?

Speaker 4:

So this one's a big sticking point for me using email and domains and outdated phrases that scream, I am old and therefore I am out of touch. So if you are using Yahoo, a OL Hotmail, what's that? What that's doing is it's exposing you to age bias. It's not fair. So the most tech savvy people I know still have a Hotmail account, but unfortunately, you, you really wanna mitigate that bias that unfortunately does kick in. You wanna, you want the hiring manager or the recruiter to focus on your experience, your knowledge, your skills, and not get hung up on, gee, they're still using a OL and how old does that make them? Probably too old for here possibly.

Speaker 3:

Emily, I have to tell you, at several organizations that I've been the employee at, I work with donors who are retired generally, and those email addresses with the A OL and Yahoo and Hotmail are often firewalled out. And I don't even get their messages. I have to scroll through the junk mail to make sure I didn't miss any. So I think it's also just a, a risk that you're taking that your email might not even make it through the firewalls.

Speaker 4:

So true, so true. Wonderful nuance. Another piece that's sort of outdated resume terminology, like if you're still using objective statement at the top, or if you have references available upon requests at the bottom of your resume, please, please take them out. It's dating you. It's making the reader realize that, geez, Katie didn't have to put together a resume from 19, whoever, right? And, and just you're creating a lot of room for bias to kick in and we don't want that, right? So what you should do instead is yes, you know, open up a Gmail account if you're using Apple iCloud email or create your own personal domain name if you have your own sort of freelance nonprofit business on the side. I also see this a lot. It's, it's free, it's easy to do. Katie create a custom vanity URL on LinkedIn. And so keep it simple, like have the link that drives people to your LinkedIn profile to be simple, like for your first name and your last name.

Speaker 4:

And if, and it is possible, there may be Katie Zer, right? There may well be, you know, on a platform with 1 billion people, there may be another Katie Zer in the universe of LinkedIn. So what I tell people is, instead of just adding a special number or character at the end of your last name, why not add your target job title or a professional designation at the end of your public profile name instead and show that you are more aligned with the technological times. What about number three? So keyword stuffing. So evidence of keyword stuffing. So while this strategy can be helpful as far as automated resume

screening, right, applicant tracking systems, the applicant tracking system is looking for, it's scouring your resume, Katie. It's parsing the information, it's looking for those high priority keywords that show up on the job descriptions. However, you know, applicants should keep in mind that a successful resume, again, will ultimately have to be read by a real person.

Speaker 4:

And it's crucial that you're presenting the keywords in context. So, you know, I actually had a client ask me a very clever one. She said, you know, Emily, I put all of the key words and the qualifications in, you know, tiny, tiny invisible ink, like white ink at the bottom of my resume. Yeah, I thought that was pretty darn clever on her part. And she did it to rank high on the applicant tracking system. So, you know, this will end up biting you later because, you know, and the ATSSs, by the way, are getting more sophisticated right there. There's AI that's, that's woven in and AI is using a lot of these deep language models to sort of make sense of your language that's on, you know, your resume. So, so, so yes, incorporate key words, but please don't stuff them in for the sake of stuffing them in.

Speaker 4:

What you need to do is, and you should do, is weave in those priority keywords, bring them to life. Give examples, you know, the proverbial show me, don't just tell me. So a perfect example of this, Katie, like there's some overused keywords that show up a lot even on job descriptions. Like, oh, we need someone who's a great team player, we need someone who's a great communicator. Well give me proof points and, and the nuance of how you are a great communicator. Are you the person that consistently gets tapped to deliver complex, you know, breakdown complex topics to lay people in executive style presentations? Or are you a great communicator because you know how to negotiate and you know how to resolve conflict?

Speaker 3:

Yeah, those are great examples and very different ways of being excellent at communicating <laugh>.

Speaker 4:

Exactly. So show me, don't tell me. And then, you know, the key word piece, you know, so when, when you're writing a resume, especially for the career switchers that are on the call looking to pivot to the nonprofit philanthropic space, you know, every industry has its own jargon sort of ways to define how you, how you're successful, right? In the job that you're in. So, so you find ways to incorporate similar language, the transferable skills that you bring in the nonprofit speak. Now Katie, I'm gonna ask you, you know, you, you're the expert on all things philanthropy and, and giving maybe you can share with the audience some, some high priority keywords that matter for your industry

Speaker 3:

Anytime that you can differentiate how you've done portfolio management versus donor relationship management. I think that's a great way to distinguish the type of work that you're doing any time that you have produced mass communications versus bespoke communications and separating the metrics on that. So, you know, a mass communication might have metrics related to a response rate, where a bespoke communication might be about the, the donor's relationship deepening with the organization. So no matter what you're doing though, you've gotta be honest and it's better to use real numbers and then talk about percentage increases or decreases because of your action instead of conflating or being

vague so that the person looking at the resume can't put into context what you were actually doing or what you were actually achieving at your previous jobs.

Speaker 4:

Fabulous. Thanks for the lesson, Katie. So I think that kind of wrapped sort of the, the keyword stuffing piece. Get the keywords that matter and show me, don't just tell me

Speaker 3:

The, the idea of just adding them at the bottom and invisible ink is not a good, good way to do it anymore. It may have worked for two weeks before they caught onto that. Okay, great. So are we at number two now?

Speaker 4:

Yes, we are. And it goes to the, the whole explosion of ai. So sort of not a good idea, Katie, to, you know, use chat GPT or other AI tools to exclusively write your resume. You know, the ease, convenience and the fact that it's free to help, you know, using chat GPT to write your resume is the reason why everyone else is doing the same thing. And there's danger in over-relying on chat GPT s because it's going, it's not going to give you the unique value proposition. That thing that you unique sauce that makes Katie, Katie, right? The unique skills, knowledge and abilities that you bring to the table that you're able to, to sort of rally around to solve the hiring manager's problem chat. GPT is going to scour the web, it's gonna look for content that it can pull into your resume, probably pilfered from somewhere else, right?

Speaker 4:

It's not gonna customize the content. You're gonna lose sort of that human element, right? The nuance of writing. And yes, resume writing is a very different style of writing. It's not gonna do what ultimately you can do, which is tell the story of how your specific knowledge, skills, and abilities make you uniquely qualified for this specific job posting. And, you know, no surprises. There's also an explosion now counter explosion, right? Of AI content checkers, right? To see if your content was generated by ai and hiring managers are using this. Recruiters are becoming increasingly aware of how people are overly relying on chat GPT to create resumes. So my my sort of takeaway is use it as a tool. Absolutely. There's, there's so many others out there. Embrace the tool, help it to sort of overcome your writer's block, you know, use it to generate sort of that initial outline of your resume, but remember that it's not gonna replace what makes you, you know, wonderful. You and I I, I read this the other day on another LinkedIn site, you know, the person wrote, you won't get the I in ai. So remember that

Speaker 3:

When we do use these AI tools to create part of our resume or to get us out of some writer's block, it makes it all the much more important to proofread your resume really word by word. And one thing that you and I have discussed before is this idea that anything that's on your resume is fair game for the interview and the idea of using AI to change how you've been saying something, it's just really important that you still really agree with the way it's coming out, the way that this AI has reframed your

Speaker 4:

Bullets. Correct. I love that you said Ernie, anything on your resume exactly is fair game and I remember achievement in, and it's frankly something that I had done maybe only 1% of the time. And sure enough,

what does the hiring manager hone in on during the resume interview process That lousy 1% of my job that I tooted my horn on. And let me tell you, Katie, I deleted that thing as fast as I got once I got home

Speaker 3:

<Laugh>, right? It's like if you don't wanna talk about it, do not put it on your resume.

Speaker 4:

Exactly.

Speaker 3:

All right, well I'm on the edge of my seat. I wanna know what the number one reason why resumes fail, tell us.

Speaker 4:

So no clear job target, you know, a resume is not going to be successful if it's the generic takes a one size fits all approach. You know, the that saying, jack of all trades, master of none, you know, I can do a little bit of marketing, I can also do fundraising and HR on the side and oh yeah, I also wanna let you know that I, I wanna become a licensed real estate broker. So, you know, it's not everything in the kitchen sink, it's not a career obituary, it's not everything that you ever did in your life. And certainly please don't include personal stuff unless it's relevant or, you know, there, there's certainly maybe some hobbies that lend themselves to great conversations in interviews when you are crafting a resume, you wanna have a clear target job title at, you know, sort of prominently displayed at the top.

Speaker 4:

You wanna weave all of your knowledge and your skills and abilities and a professional summaries. That's, you know, usually, again, most important real estate at the top. Think of it as your billboard, your Times Square billboard, or I'll use the Super Bowl analogy, like if you had a Super Bowl ad that was 30 seconds, Katie, what would it say about you? And when you think of it like that, you get very mindful and very intentional about the words that you choose to use at that very top in that professional summary that you're, you're showcasing who you are, the problems you're good at solving the industries you've been in, the relevant knowledge that matters and the skills, achievements, et cetera. And it's recent, right? Generally that means the past 10 years, if you go beyond 10 years, there's, there's exceptions to the rule. But that's usually a good rule of thumb. You know, showcasing the industries you've worked in and incorporating your core competencies, again, that, that unique value proposition that we talked about, this is what I'm known for. You can weave in your behavioral traits in the professional summary and you know, remember the, the wise approach of of Da Vinci, you know, in his letter to that Duke, it was written in the you voice and your resume is a targeted career marketing document that should have a clear job target in mind.

Speaker 3:

Excellent. Last one. But actually Emily, I think you have one more half step for us and what's that?

Speaker 4:

Yeah, Katie, it would be sort of the icing on the cake, if you will, to add a personal branding or mission statement that captures who you are and what makes you unique in a very sort of short pithy

statement, think of it as your logo and certainly in the for-profit space, it really helps you stand out as a candidate. So I'm curious to hear your thoughts, Katie, how would this mission statement play out in the nonprofit world?

Speaker 3:

Yeah, it is a make or break for sure when it comes to the hiring manager or the HR screening team. If they can't see why Emily cares about the mission of the organization, organization, they're not going to advance your application. It just doesn't make any sense. There are plenty of other people who have shown in their application why they care about the mission and why they wanna work towards this mission. So it's a real miss if you, if you can't connect your career history, career path, career trajectory to the mission of the nonprofit organization that you would like to be hired at. Right.

Speaker 4:

Makes sense.

Speaker 3:

Well thank you so much Emily. We've got one more episode with you and it just flows so nicely. So we've talked about the modern job search, we've talked about finding your north star today. We covered how to make a great resume and next we're gonna talk about a couple of things that keep us from really excelling in the interview process. One is week ties, so making sure that you're talking to the right people. And two is imposter syndrome. So I can't wait to dig into that with you. Thank you again.

Speaker 4:

Thank you for having me Katie.

Speaker 2:

Thanks for listening today and if you have questions for us or ideas for guests that could join us on the podcast, email us at hello@askingforgood.com.