

# Resume Secrets From the People

## Who Read Them

by Nancy Olson Shanks

**I**n a time when computers are replacing humans, companies are downsizing and Ph.D.s are competing for entry-level positions, a resume has a much bigger job to do. Successful job seekers realize that a resume is much more than a laundry list of past jobs. It is a presentation of oneself. From it, a prospective employer will derive information about an applicant's work skills, and possibly his or her character, dependability, commitment, values, judgment and more.

While types and styles of resumes will vary depending on the field of work one is in, human resource professionals tend to agree that a resume should describe the whole person.

"It is a reflection of the individual," says Bonnie Duphiney, assistant principal at Grapevine Elementary School in Vista, Calif. "Your resume tells an employer, 'Here's what type of person I am and here's the kind of service I will provide.'"

"Even the type of paper and type style you choose make a difference," says Anne Rooney McCord, vice president of human resources at Bonfils Blood Center in Denver. "It shows what kind of judgment you have."

With so many people competing for the same jobs, the successful applicant must present a well-planned, carefully written and error-free resume to his or her prospective employer. Taking steps to ensure the resume is read is almost as important as what is written.

### Resumes that don't stand a chance

"With so many resumes coming across our desks every day, we've got to narrow down the choice

somehow," says Suzanne Wingo, director of human resources at Coopers and Lybrand in Louisville, Ky. "First of all, we can't look at two-page cover letters or multiple-page resumes."

McCord agrees. "I want to know which resumes I can put into the review-later pile," she says, "and I have to establish the keepers in a matter of minutes."

"I won't give the resume a second glance if it doesn't have a

She adds that she gives little leeway for typos and grammatical errors and cuts a resume from the pile if it is more than one page.

At CH2M Hill, an international consulting engineering firm, a computer makes no allowance for typos.

"We don't initially read resumes," says Darell Nepil, staffing manager for the company's Denver office.

"We scan resumes directly into our computer database. It's important

*"Someone sent me a cover letter on extremely bright paper with bold type, and the first line read, 'Now that I've gotten your attention...' Guess where that one went?"*

cover letter, if the salary requirement is too high, if the content is difficult to read, or if there are typos," she continues. "Then, I should be able to scan a resume to find the critical elements required for the job. I also look to see if the applicant has been job-hopping or has had truly valid work experience."

"Once we get a stack down to 20 or so," she says, "we may give the resumes to the hiring authority and let him or her choose several to interview."

Duphiney says she closely scans resumes to determine the keepers. "We even look for specific words... as well as the use of positive adjectives," she says. "At a glance, the resume should be our first indicator that the candidate has a strong work ethic and strong character."

for applicants to know whether or not a company is doing this."

Nepil explains that the computer's optical character recognition program must be able to "read" the resume. If the computer cannot recognize the letters, the resume may not be stored in the database. Also, the computer does not recognize misspelled words.

"For example, we search for key words and phrases, such as 'land-fill' or 'solid-waste management,'" he says. "If you've misspelled 'solid waste,' your resume is not going to be found."

Nepil says the computer stores cover letters as well, but they are not proofread and corrected by input staff, as many of the resumes are. "If you're one of our top five candidates and we find that your