



the **LavaCon** Conference on
**Advanced Technical Communication
and Project Management**

**The Top 10 Mistakes Writers
Make When Looking for Work**

Presented by
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About the Speaker

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Overview

- Ground Rules
- The 10 Most Common Mistakes
- Questions and Answers

Ground Rules

- Group Participation: I welcome audience suggestions, anecdotes and opinions.
- Disclaimer: Anything I say is just my opinion—it's not true unless you try it and see if it's true *for you*.
- I'll present opposing points of view on certain topics and let you decide.
- Speaking in Hypertext

Overview

- HR vs. Agency Recruiters
- Recruiters receive 10's if not 100's of resumes a day, each of which must be read, evaluated against current job requirements, processed, clarified and filed.
- If you want them to help you find a job, help them do *their* jobs.
- Presented in order of chronology, not severity

1. Not Following Submission Directions

- Read the directions
- First Impressions Last
- Email, Fax or Snail Mail?
- Formatted or ASCII Resume?

2. Not Building Personal Relationships

- Develop a personal relationship with your recruiter.
- You want someone who will sing your praises to the next person in the hiring process.
- ...especially if you are not an exact match or have some other special situation.
- Plus, when a cool job comes in, who do you think they will call first?

3. Bad Manners

- It's poor form to mail your resume to 45 recruiters in one email...
- ...especially when you display them all in the To: field!
- Keep a log of where your resume has been sent.
- Don't insult the recruiter. (I'm not kidding—it happens!)

4. Applying When You Are not Even Remotely Qualified

- Don't apply without considering the requirements.
- Do apply for jobs that are a bit of a stretch, but at least be in the ballpark!
- Don't do "shotgun" applications.
- Pay attention to the "must have" vs. "nice to have" requirements.

5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements

- Not all recruiters have the time to read your resume from top to bottom—some just skim for keywords and needed skills.
- If you are qualified, the recruiter will write a summary of how your skills match the job requirements before passing it on.
- However, they are not professional tech writers. Do you really want them to decide if you are a good enough match to pass on?

5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements

Hi,

I saw your posting for a technical writer. I believe I am already in your database - but please have a look at my attached resume and let me know if I have the qualifications you are looking for.

5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements (cont.)

- Be pro-active: send a matrix of the job requirements vs. your skills so they don't have to do it for you.
- If you don't have one of the needed skills, this is where you say, "I don't have XYZ, but I do have ABC, which is very similar."

5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements (cont.)

- Suddenly, the recruiters *love* you:
 - They didn't have to search for the information.
 - You typed the summary for them.
 - You pointed out important information they may have missed.
 - All they had to do is verify the information and pass it on.

6. Misnaming Your Resume

- Remember, recruiters get 10's if not 100's of electronic resumes a day.
- Put yourself in the recruiter's shoes. Would *you* want to receive 100 resumes a day named "resume.doc"?
- Name your resume so it can be found easily: for example, "Joe Jones.doc"
- P.S. About your email address...

7. Poor Writing or Formatting In Your Resume

- Your resume is the second sample of your writing skill.
- Programmers can get away with bad writing and formatting, but technical writers cannot!
- Hiring managers judge candidates based on their resumes...
- ...and will disqualify you if have sloppy mistakes in your resume.

8. Mis-evaluation of Importances

- Highlight your strengths.
- Minimize your weaknesses.
- For example, put the most applicable information, experience or skills near the top of your resume.
- Put less- or non-applicable experience near the bottom.

9. Not Anticipating Questions

- Recruiters wonder about oddities in resumes, so be pro-active and explain them.
- Examples:
 - Gaps in Your Work History
 - Your Citizenship or Work Visa Status
 - Moving from Contract to Perm
 - Moving from Perm to Contract (to a lesser degree)
 - Need Relocation Assistance if Out-of-state?

10. Not Keeping Your Skills Current

- Not Knowing Tools
- If you can really just pick them up in a week, how come you haven't already done so?
- Between chapter meetings, chapter mentor programs, and conferences, there is no reason not to stay current.

Summary

- Follow submission directions.
- Build personal relationships.
- Use good manners and Netiquette.
- Apply for jobs for which you are qualified.
- Include a summary of how your skills match the job requirements when you submit your resume.
- Name your electronic resume so it can be identified.
- Proofread your resume.
- Highlight your strengths, minimize your weaknesses.
- Anticipate and answer questions.
- Keep your skills current.

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