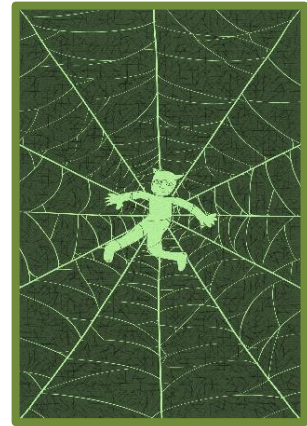


Twelve Ways You May, Unknowingly, Be Sabotaging Your Job Search

by Marilyn Tullius, M.S.



- 1. One at a time.** Do not be the job candidate who submits one application to a job, then stops until they learn of the outcome. It is better to target a job category and submit several resumes weekly. Your pipeline of applications will sharpen your interview skills and indicate adjustments that may be appropriate.
- 2. Being uninformed about your chances.** Your chances are highest when targeting an opportunity in the same industry and job role; next highest likelihood is in an adjacent industry and job role, and lowest in a new industry and role. Learning a new industry's culture, standards, and jargon places you at a disadvantage; learning new tools and software of a new role (job function) makes it difficult to compete with others who have "been there and done that."
- 3. Aiming at a lower level position.** Do not be the job seeker who is misinformed that aiming lower in the responsibility ladder will mean they are abundantly qualified at the lower level. This is not true because your skills may be outdated, and you may compete against a higher volume of candidates who offer recent experience at this level.
- 4. Submitting a minimal resume.** You may have seen resume advice to prepare a resume that is limited to Contact Information, Skills, Experience, and Education. The minimal resume may pass through digital screening, also known as Applicant Tracking System (ATS), but you need a resume that also impresses the hiring manager. You can strengthen your resume by developing a summary section, expanding skills to include soft skills, including leadership, listing values, attributes, and traits in a "Known for" section, and adding such items as languages, memberships, travel, and any employment gap explanation.
- 5. Ignoring the job posting.** Job postings are the authoritative drivers of your resume updating along with adjustments as needed to match requirements of the prospective employer. The content shares meaningful detail and contains critical key words that you should reflect in your resume.
- 6. Restricting your resume to one page.** This mythical rule needs to be retired especially for online resume submissions. The standard length is now two pages, which allows you to include more key words and offers your reader a more inviting visual layout. As an extra document, you could prepare an "Ask Me About" page to take with you when networking, or a page of achievement stories to complement your resume.



- 7. Using wrong formats for digital scanning.** The rejection rate of resumes digitally scanned by Applicant Tracking Systems is 75 to 80%. Pretest your resume by uploading it to Indeed and clicking on the Edit button to see how it looks in the Cloud. Another way to test your resume is to save it in plain text format (.txt). Then note and avoid using columns, tables, text boxes, headers, shapes and “designer layouts,” which either disappear or cause your resume to disintegrate into chaos.
- 8. Neglecting to explain a gap in employment.** It is best to briefly describe a gap of greater than three months within the past three years. You may set up the specifics to mimic the presentation of your employment entries. Include ways you have added value to your capabilities during your gap by volunteering, skills training, advanced education, freelance work, and activities that have enriched your knowledge.
- 9. Aiming at entry level after an employment gap.** From mid to senior levels, look for opportunities to avoid going back to entry level. Best to assess skills and add capabilities you have developed that may be valued in the same industry and role. Job seekers with IT backgrounds might look at opportunities in software sales and customer support positions. Job seekers with leadership experience might consider working in a nonprofit organization.
- 10. Placing contact information in a header function.** This is one of the most damaging ways to sabotage yourself. The header and footer functions of MS Word, for one, will completely disappear when the resume you submit is converted for digital scanning.
- 11. Failing to keep your references informed.** You may not have given thought to how much you need your references until you realize they are necessary to lock down the job you are excited about. It’s best to keep in touch with your references. They will appreciate your notifying them to expect a reference request for you before the prospective employer contacts them.
- 12. Underestimating the Power of LinkedIn.** LinkedIn has evolved. It becomes more valuable with frequent updates. Also, the standards have risen (for example, backgrounds behind headshots are now discouraged). Limits on the number of characters allowed for established sections are more generous and new features are being added. You need to log into your LinkedIn page to upgrade it at least every three months. Be sure your LinkedIn page and your resume are aligned.

