

# Introduction

## **Why Are Bad Resumes Funny? And Why Are Funny Resumes Bad?**

We've all seen this phenomenon: after a certain point, bad things turn funny. Movies are the perfect example: some movies are just so "Gigli" that we can't stop laughing. Others even earn a cult following. But not so with the bad resume. A bad resume is more of a private phenomenon. Until now.

Laughing at a bad resume is like laughing at someone who slips and falls on the ice. It's funny only as long as they get back up. But as long as they're down, they do provide the rest of us with an entertaining dose of "how-not-to's" that we are well advised not-to-follow.

For the purposes of this book, a bad resume is simply a resume that does not achieve its fundamental purpose: to present the job seeker in a positive light compared to the competition. Funny resumes - this book's obsession - are bad resumes that fail this objective in unique and unusual ways. Instead of being littered with typos, a funny resume is usually tainted by one or two unfortunate gaffes that inspire the hiring manager to file it away in their "funny file."

To understand why some of these people fell, you have to know something about how hiring managers evaluate resumes and what they are (and aren't) looking for. As commission-based recruiters for ten years, your authors learned how managers feel about bad resumes the hard way: no hires, no food on table. This inside info helps to set the scene for the individual sections of this book, and might even provide a little help-on-the-fly for those readers who want to improve their resumes without poring over a bland "how to write a good resume" tutorial.

But why do funny resumes have to be bad? Isn't there such a thing as a "good" funny resume, a resume that entertains while at the same time enhancing the credibility and prospects of the job seeker? The "good" funny resume does indeed exist, but it's a rare

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phenomenon that's more of a miraculous accident than a sure-fire methodology to imitate. To prove their existence, at the end of this book, we do include a small section of resumes that entertained us without derailing the job seeker. But it's interesting to note that even these "good" funny resumes didn't really improve the job seekers' prospects. Their credentials were scrutinized just the same.

It's hard to make resumes funny and good because of the limitations of the medium. To be sure, there are certain industries where creative presentations are more effective (advertising, graphic design, and entertainment come to mind). But even in these fields, the "flava" is in the creative samples you might include along with (but not in place of) a traditional resume. Artists beware: resumes were never meant to be a satisfying form of self-expression.

The vast majority of our book's examples come from job searches we conducted in the Information Technology (IT) field. Although IT isn't the most conservative field we can think of, it's fair to say that most of our clients had a fairly corporate image, and resumes (and cover letters) were assessed with that in mind.

On the other hand, some of our most eyebrow-curling excerpts came from searches we did for computer gaming companies that, in theory, should be more open to hiring folks with a "wilder side." But as a general rule, the more fun the job seeker had with their resume, the less fun they had waiting for a call back. The resume writers you'll meet in the coming pages are, with a few glaring exceptions, competent professionals. But they assumed that the resumes they sent to us were the right vehicle for sharing off-the-beaten-track adventures, controversial opinions, and the occasional piece of titillating personal information.

Sooner or later, the skeptical amongst you are going to wonder: are the people in this book for real? Yes - all of the excerpts in this book are taken from actual resumes and cover letters we received from 1994 to 2003. Of course, to ensure the job seekers' anonymity, certain identifying details have been altered. But otherwise, these resume excerpts appear as we received them - typos and all. In a few instances, we removed typos that made the examples unreadable. So if you see a typo, our defense is that in this book, all typos are intentional. Any humorous consequences of said

typos are, of course, also intentional. If only we could say that about all of our publishing projects!

Although the principles of resume badness transcend the IT field, you will notice that many of our examples do contain IT lingo and technical references. The good news is that you don't need to know the lingo to appreciate the humor. We can say that with confidence because we ourselves would fail a test that required us to define these terms in much detail. So while you don't need to understand IT terminology to enjoy this book, remember that when someone is applying for an IT job, hands-on experience is paramount. If they don't have the specific technical skills required, they have no shot at the position, regardless of how high they turn up the charm. And no, highlighting various certifications (especially failed ones) is not a good way to compensate for a lack of hands-on skills.

Finally, we would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge that the job market is serious business these days. Truly, we owe these "bad resume pioneers" a debt a gratitude for not only entertaining us, but for showing us what to avoid as we pursue our prospects in a job-scarce "global economy." As *The New York Times* noted in November of 2002, the average resume is rife with the kinds of mistakes that cause an inundated hiring manager to fire off their "thanks but no thanks" email templates. Given the imperfect competition, a good resume is an edge we can seriously use. As for the bad ones, they never really seem to get their due. It's about time.

