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Now, that same flood of resumes is filtered electronically and much of that first-level scanning is done by a computer program. Recruiters can simply search on specific keywords and only pull up resumes that include those specific words. So how do you get past the computer program and get your resume in front of a recruiter for government jobs? And how do you make sure that recruiter sees exactly what he's looking for?

You Gotta Have Goals

First, you have to know what job you're looking for. Sometimes recent college graduates, or people who have been laid off, become so wrapped around the necessity of finding a job that they forget to think about which job. They submit the same resume to a dozen different postings without tailoring anything. This approach is sort of like asking out every girl at a bar at the same time: no one is very impressed.

Look through the job postings on USAJobs.gov. If you are certain you want to perform a certain job function, or if you know you want to work for a certain agency, carefully read several postings for open positions that meet your criteria. Understand the keywords used in the posting - everything the hiring manager wants to see is all right there. If you fit the jobs, print out the postings. Write on them. Mark them up. Highlight the parts that sound like you.

Keyword Optimization In Your Resume

Use the job postings you printed and marked up to create an outline for your resume. Organize it based on the skills and requirements that are the most important to the hiring organization.

For example, if the posting states several times that you must have excellent writing skills, put writing skills at the top of your outline. Use the exact same words in your outline that were used in the posting so that you hit the right keywords.

Then, spell out the specifics of how you have met all the requirements. Be specific, use numbers to quantify your accomplishments, but don't get too wordy.

Brevity Is The Soul Of Wit

Keep it short and simple. Remember, your resume may be one of hundreds. If it is multiple pages in length, the recruiter will likely get bored before he reaches the end. You don't have to share your whole biography here, only the details that are relevant to this particular position. Remember who will be reading it and how - in a hurry, with a specific objective. So keep your writing focused on the requirements of the posting.

Get a Second Opinion

Always have a friend, relative or associate read over your resume before you post it. Back in the old days, when resumes had to be printed, we probably caught more of our own typos and misstatements. In the digital age, it is just so easy to throw something together and send it off into the system without a second glance. The recruiter at the other end, however, will definitely be turned off by glaring errors.

Spell-check is a good start, but it can't check for misused words and the grammar check is not infallible. Be sure to read your resume aloud to yourself to catch errors. Then find another actual human - preferably one with an eye for English - to read though the document for you. Provide them with a copy of the job posting so that they can cross-check against the job requirements. If you have a co-worker help you with this, they will probably point out other skills relevant to the posting that you haven't mentioned.

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