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Items with no place on your resume

By Tom Mangan

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Which blunders will send your resume straight into oblivion? There might be dozens, depending on the job, but experts say these common resume mistakes are most likely to derail your job search.

► **Your age:** Hiring managers need to know what you can do for them, not how many years you've managed to stay alive. Darlene Zambruski, managing editor of ResumeEdge.com and JobInterviewEdge.com, advises against listing professional experience more than 15 years old and providing an exact number of years of professional experience in your opening summary.

"For example: 'senior accountant with more than 25 years of experience in' — this kind of data invites age discrimination," Zambruski said.

And don't forget that age bias cuts both ways: A resume that tells a future boss you're too young for the job is no good, either.

► Lists of tasks or duties

without results: Your resume has to go beyond saying which jobs you've done: It must establish what you've accomplished on those jobs. Many applicants miss this key distinction.

"The only things that separate equally qualified candidates are the results of their efforts," Zambruski said. "For example, an administrative assistant may write, 'reorganized filing system.' That provides the task. What were the results? A better way to write it would be, 'Increased team productivity 20 percent by reorganizing filing system.' Results are what matter to hiring managers."

► Explanations of anything

negative: Everybody has dark stories in their past, but there's no place for them on your resume.

"Your resume is a promotional document and all promotional documents need to be positive," said Teddy Burriss, a career counselor and outplacement consultant in Winston-Salem, N.C.

The time to explain yourself is when you're talking to somebody in person

after you've scored an interview, Burriss said.

► **A list of every job you've ever held:** Hiring managers don't want to know about that summer you worked as a lifeguard — unless you're applying to manage the park district's pool.

"Recruiters and hiring managers are looking for relevance and stability," Burriss said. The key is to list the work you've done in the past 10 to 15 years that tells an employer you're a skilled, reliable fit for the job.

Say you've had three employers in the past seven years but only two of them are in the industry you're applying for. Employers don't want to see a gap in your employment record, so you still need to list that third job — just make sure you list the accomplishments in that job that are relevant to the job you're applying for.

► **Personal details:** Employers usually don't care about your marital status, race, sexual orientation or hobbies, unless they are somehow pivotal to the job. Including personal data is a rookie mistake, and nobody

wants to hire a rookie.

Crafting and sending a resume is part of the "discovery phase" of the hiring process, Burriss said, so employers at this phase don't need personal details beyond your name, city, state and a way to contact you. If you make it to the hiring phase, the human resources department will collect your relevant personal details then.

Most resumes are now transmitted electronically, and there's no way to be sure where one might end up after you send it in. With identity thieves always on the prowl, you always need to protect your personal data. Never include your Social Security number.

A few more quick tips from the staffing agency Temporary Resources Inc.:

► Make sure your resume has no typos, grammar goofs or factual errors (like getting a company's name wrong).

► Don't list your salary history unless the employer demands it.

► Don't worry about providing references. You can do that in a separate document.