

#1 Risk Of Asking Everyone You Know For Resume Input

Lately, I've noticed an increasing number of job hunters and career changers are confused about the ambivalent advice they receive on resume writing. It's an annoying "everyone-is-an-expert" situation.

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There are two reasons for this dilemma:

1. There are no fixed rules regarding resumes.

There are no binding, always-applying rules for your resume. There are certain current industry standards, but those are subject to the ever-evolving demands and requirements of the job market. The bottom line here is you cannot really say something is clearly wrong or clearly right. Obviously, this leaves room for discussion and a lot of "well-meant advice."

2. Everyone has created a resume.

Pretty much everyone has written a resume at some stage in their lives, and this process might have led to interviews. Or remember your uncle, who reviewed five resumes eight years ago for his local pawn shop, and is now your family's veteran HR expert? You see, you are pretty much surrounded by career and resume experts everywhere you go.

The risk.

Obviously, it is hard in this situation to judge what advice is good and what is not. Let me give you an example from my practice:

Recently, one of my own resume clients came back with feedback regarding my first draft for his resume and said that, even though he thought it was great, he had feedback from two independent people that thought the top third of the first page of the resume should be changed.

Now, that was going to be interesting (just in case you are new to the resume world, the top third of a resume is THE most important part of the entire document). I asked the client if he was comfortable sharing the source of this information. It turned out, we had feedback from a close family member and a best friend. There is, of course, nothing wrong with this, but it led me to asking the following questions:

1. How many resumes do they screen, scan, and review on a weekly basis?
2. How many people do they invite to interviews based on their resume reviews on a weekly, monthly, or annual basis?

I am pretty sure you can imagine the answers.

Neither one of the reviewers dealt with resumes, hiring nor anything career-related professionally. This alone could be an indicator that you should judge and evaluate their input carefully.

Again, there is nothing wrong with asking people that are close to you, but there is an even bigger pitfall than the limited amount of resumes your beloved ones might deal with.

The time they take.

If you ask one of your best friends to read your resume, how much time will they dedicate to help you out?

If they are a truly good friend, they will reserve some time for this task and they will most likely not answer any phone calls while diligently examining your single most important career document.

I would say they probably spend anywhere between five and 15 minutes analyzing your document.

And that is the BIG problem.

No hiring manager or recruiter in the world is going to take that amount of time and diligence to look at your resume. Remember, a recruiter might be looking at 40 resumes a day and will spend anywhere between 10 and 20 seconds “scanning” your resume, possibly while on hold on the other line.

Your best friend or spouse will keep reading on, even if the top third of your resume is a bit lengthy, or contains a huge chunk of text, and they might be delighted with your volunteer experience on the bottom of page two. Too bad the recruiter or HR professional will never read this part if you don’t immediately catch their interest in the top third of your resume.

So, what happened to my client?

Even though he still remained somewhat reluctant, I was able to convince him that the top third was not too short, but contained exactly what was needed to catch and maintain the attention span of a professional on the hiring end. Is that the reason why he got the interview with the organization he really fancied? I chose to believe that it was one of the reasons.