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from someone who read thousands

WHY YOUR RESUME ISN'T GETTING INTERVIEWS

What happens after you click apply, how to write bullets that prove results, and how to get your resume in front of a real person.

You're qualified. Maybe overqualified. You've sent dozens of applications and heard nothing back. It's easy to decide something is wrong with you. Usually, something is wrong with how your experience is written.

I've read thousands of resumes. Recruiters often spend only seconds on a first scan, and most job postings get more applicants than anyone can read carefully. Your resume has one job: get you to the "yes, let's talk" pile. This guide shows you how.

In this guide

1. The real reasons resumes get passed over
2. What happens to your resume after you click apply
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5. Formatting that works for people and software
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1. The real reasons resumes get passed over

- **It lists duties, not results.** "Responsible for hiring" tells me nothing about how well you did it.
- **It isn't tailored.** The same resume sent to 100 different jobs matches none of them closely.
- **The most important information is buried.** If your best achievement is on page two, it may never be seen.
- **The target is unclear.** A resume trying to fit every job ends up fitting none.
- **You applied late or only online.** Many roles get flooded in the first few days, and referrals are often reviewed first.

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2. What happens to your resume after you click apply

Most mid-size and large employers use an applicant tracking system (ATS) to collect and organize applications. There are many myths about these systems. Here's what matters in practice:

- **Knockout questions** ("Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?" "Do you have a nursing license?") can screen you out automatically. Answer them carefully and honestly.
- **Recruiters search the system by keywords**, like job titles, skills, and certifications. If the words from the posting aren't in your resume, you may never show up in a search.
- **Some layouts don't read cleanly.** Text inside images, complex tables, and graphics can get scrambled when the system pulls information out.
- **A human still decides.** Software helps sort, but a person almost always makes the call. Write for both.

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3. Write bullets that prove results

Use this formula for every bullet: **action verb + what you did + measurable result.**

Before	After
Responsible for hiring	**Hired 45 engineers in 9 months, cutting time-to-fill from 60 to 35 days**
Managed social media	**Grew Instagram followers from 2,000 to 15,000 in one year, driving 20% of online sales**
Handled customer complaints	**Resolved an average of 40 customer issues a week, raising satisfaction scores from 3.8 to 4.6**
Helped with budget	**Identified $120,000 in vendor savings during the annual budget review**

No exact numbers? Use estimates you can defend ("about 30 clients"), scale ("a team of 12," "a $2M budget"), or frequency ("weekly," "every quarter").

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4. Tailor every application in 15 minutes

1. Print or copy the job posting. Highlight the skills, tools, and requirements that appear most often or first.
2. Update your headline and summary to match the role title and their top two needs.
3. Reorder your bullets so the most relevant achievements come first.
4. Use their exact words where they truthfully describe your experience. If they say "stakeholder management," don't only write "working with partners."

5. Remove anything that doesn't support this particular role.

Keep a master resume with everything, and save a tailored copy for each application.

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5. Formatting that works for people and software

- Use a simple, single-column layout with standard headings: Summary, Experience, Education, Skills.
- Use a common font and a readable size. Save as a PDF unless the posting asks for Word.
- Put your name, city and state, email, phone, and LinkedIn URL at the top, in the main body, not in a header or footer.
- One page for early career, two pages for most experienced professionals.
- Leave off photos, full street address, date of birth, and "References available upon request."
- Name the file clearly: FirstName-LastName-Resume.pdf.

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6. Stop relying on the apply button

The resume matters, but how it arrives matters too. A resume passed along by an employee often gets a closer look than one of hundreds in the pile.

- **Apply early.** Set job alerts and aim to apply within the first few days of a posting.
- **Find a person.** After you apply, look up the hiring manager or someone on the team on LinkedIn and send a short, specific note.
- **Ask for referrals.** Check your connections at the company. "I just applied for the project manager role. Would you be open to passing my resume along?"

> THE NOTE THAT GETS READ
>
> "Hi Maria, I just applied for the Operations Manager role on your team. At my last company I cut onboarding time in half, and I'd love to help with the expansion you mentioned in your recent post. Happy to share more if helpful."

7. Your resume rescue checklist

1. Choose one target role and write your summary for it.
2. Rewrite every bullet as action, what you did, and result.
3. Put your strongest achievements at the top of each role.
4. Switch to a simple, single-column format with standard headings.
5. Tailor your resume to each posting using its keywords, truthfully.
6. Apply within the first few days of a posting.
7. Send one short note to a real person for every application that matters.

ready for your next step?

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Book a strategy call with Elena

One-on-one help with your interviews, resume, salary negotiation, or next career move.

Book your strategy call

Sign up for the next networking session

Two hours, live, with a small group. Practice real conversations and leave with scripts you can use the next day.

Save your seat

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