



# 30 JOB SEARCH MISTAKES TO AVOID

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Here's our list of **30 mistakes to avoid** when applying for a new role, with insights into how to improve your approach and increase your chances of standing out from the competition. Some of these are more geared towards senior leaders but the information is still valuable.

Please follow our Founder [Lee Higgins](#) on LinkedIn for more content and information on Skills and Role Fit reports. We will also be hosting regular webinars where we share information on how to successfully navigate your career transition.

## 1. Overlooking Achievements

Focusing too much on past responsibilities instead of actual accomplishments can weaken your candidacy. Highlight specific successes, like sales and revenue growth, team development, or major projects completed. Make your achievements quantifiable and specific where possible (see number 11). It's easy to forget what you've done in the past and things that you may take for granted still need to be written down and communicated. This is especially important when applying for a new job or promotion.

## 2. Not Customising Your CV

Applications need a tailored CV for each role, focusing on the most relevant initiatives, industries, and outcomes. Though you may have a CV that covers all your experiences, it's essential to customise it for each job application. This customisation shows that you understand the specific requirements of the role and can effectively communicate how your skills align with them. Furthermore, it demonstrates attention to detail and the ability to adapt to different situations.

When writing a CV, make sure to carefully read through the job description and identify key skills and experiences that are necessary for the role. Then, revise your CV to highlight those particular areas, showcasing how you have excelled in similar tasks or achieved desirable outcomes in previous roles. This approach not only helps your CV stand out from others but also increases your chances of securing an interview.

## 3. Neglecting Your Online Presence

In today's world where a personal brand is essential, having an online presence is crucial for experienced positions. Recruiters and hiring managers often search for candidates on LinkedIn or other professional networking sites to gain additional information about them. Make sure your online profiles are up-to-date, include relevant keywords, and showcase your experience and achievements. Additionally, having a strong online presence can also help you stand out from other candidates and demonstrate your knowledge and expertise in your field.

Some tips for improving your online presence include regularly sharing industry-related content, engaging with others in your network, and obtaining recommendations or endorsements from colleagues or previous employers. You can also consider creating a personal website to showcase your professional portfolio and achievements.

By neglecting your online presence, you could be missing out on valuable opportunities and hindering your chances of landing a new role. Embrace the digital world and use it to your advantage in showcasing yourself as a highly qualified candidate.

#### 4. Lacking Flexibility

You may have a tried and tested approach to work and may be used to following strict schedules and processes. While this level of organisation and structure can be beneficial, it's important to also demonstrate flexibility in your work style.

In today's fast-paced business world, things can change quickly, and unexpected challenges may arise. Employers are looking for people who can adapt and pivot, when necessary, rather than sticking rigidly to their plans.

One way to showcase your flexibility is by highlighting instances where you had to adjust your approach or strategy due to unforeseen circumstances. This will show potential employers that you are able to think on your feet and handle curveballs with ease.

Additionally, being open-minded and receptive to new ideas shows that you.

#### 5. Not Networking Enough

Networking is essential for career advancement in any industry, but it holds even more weight at the executive level. Expanding your professional network can lead to new job opportunities, partnerships, and valuable connections. By not networking enough, you may miss out on potential career advancements or collaborations.

To combat this issue, try to attend industry events and conferences, join professional organisations, and reach out to former colleagues or contacts for coffee or lunch. Use social media platforms like LinkedIn to connect with professionals in your field and stay updated on industry news and trends. Additionally, consider volunteering for relevant causes or initiatives that align with your personal values and interests, it can be a great way to meet new people while making a positive impact.

By actively networking and building relationships, you are increasing your visibility and opening yourself up to new opportunities.

#### 6. Including Irrelevant Information

Keep the focus on relevant qualifications and experience for the job you're applying for.

Focus on highlighting your most recent and relevant accomplishments, skills, and experiences that demonstrate your ability to excel in the role. This could include leadership experience, project management skills, strategic planning abilities, and a track record of driving results.

Additionally, consider tailoring your resume for each specific job application by emphasising the skills and experiences that align with the requirements of the position. This will show that you are a strong fit for the role and increase your chances of being selected for an interview.

#### 7. Using Too Many Buzzwords

While it's important to showcase your knowledge and expertise in your field, using too many buzzwords can make you seem insincere or lacking in originality. Instead, focus on using specific and relevant examples to illustrate your skills and accomplishments. This will not only demonstrate your expertise but also make you stand out as a unique candidate.

Additionally, avoid using industry jargon unless necessary. While it may be common language within your field, it can be confusing or off-putting for hiring managers who are not familiar with it. Some jargon can also differ between organisations.

If you do use buzzwords or jargon, make sure to provide context and explain their relevance to the job or company. This will show that you understand their importance and can effectively communicate them to others.

## 8. Failing to Customise Your Profile

A generic profile won't work. Personalise your branding to reflect the exact goals and challenges of the company. Highlight your previous experiences and accomplishments that align with the company's mission, values, and vision. Use specific examples to demonstrate how you can add value and drive results.

Additionally, make sure to tailor your profile to the specific role you are applying for. Different companies have different expectations for their people, so it's important to showcase why you are a perfect fit for this position. This can include highlighting relevant skills and experiences, as well as addressing any potential concerns or challenges the company may be facing.

Finally, don't forget to incorporate keywords from the job description into your profile. Many companies use applicant tracking systems (ATS) to filter out resumes based on certain keywords, so including them can increase your chances of getting noticed.

In addition to tailoring your profile for the specific company and position, it's also important to regularly update and maintain it. This means adding new skills, experiences, and achievements as they occur. It's also a good idea to regularly review and revise your profile to ensure it accurately reflects your current career goals and accomplishments.

Your LinkedIn profile not only serves as an online CV but also allows you to connect with potential employers, colleagues, and industry professionals by showcasing more of your personality.

## 9. Undervaluing Company Research

If you can't clearly articulate how you align with an organisation's vision, mission, or culture, it signals lack of preparation. Research the company thoroughly to understand their goals, values, and work culture. This will help you tailor your pitch and demonstrate how your skills and experiences can contribute to their success.

Conducting thorough research also allows you to ask thoughtful questions during an interview. This shows genuine interest in the company and can leave a lasting impression on the interviewer. Additionally, researching the company's competitors and industry trends can provide valuable insights and help you stand out.

In addition to researching the company, it is also important to research the position for which you are applying. This includes understanding the specific job responsibilities, required qualifications, and potential career growth opportunities. By having a clear understanding of the role, and how it fits into the strategy of the organisation, you can highlight relevant skills and experiences that align with the role requirements.

Finally, conducting research on current industry news and developments can demonstrate your passion and dedication to your field. It also allows you to stay updated on any challenges or changes facing the industry, which can be valuable information to bring up during an interview.

## 10. Not Demonstrating Strategic Thinking

Employers expect strategic vision from experienced candidates. Failing to include examples of forward-thinking initiatives or long-term successes can limit your chances of progressing in a process.

It's important to showcase your strategic thinking skills to potential employers. This not only demonstrates your ability to think ahead and plan for the future but also highlights your potential value to their organisation.

To effectively demonstrate strategic thinking, include specific examples of times when you have implemented forward-thinking initiatives. These could include developing a new business strategy, implementing cost-saving measures, or leading a successful change project that had a significant impact on the company's bottom line.

Additionally, be sure to highlight any relevant experience in analysing industry trends and data to make informed decisions. This shows your ability to think critically and make strategic decisions based on data.

### 11. Omitting Quantifiable Results

Stand out candidates make an impact. Forgetting to include metrics like revenue growth, cost reductions, or market share improvements diminishes credibility. Ensure to include measurable results that demonstrate the positive impact you have made in your previous roles. This not only showcases your achievements but also provides concrete evidence of your capabilities and potential for success.

Remember, quantifiable results speak louder than vague statements or subjective claims. For example, instead of saying "I successfully increased sales," provide specific numbers and percentages such as "I increased sales by 25% within the first quarter." This clearly shows the impact you had on the company's growth and paints a more impressive picture of your abilities.

By including quantifiable results in your CV, you showcase your track record of success and highlight your value. This is essential in standing out from other candidates and convincing potential employers that you are the best person for the job.

### 12. Ignoring Thought Leadership

Increasingly, top candidates are expected to have a voice in their industry. Neglecting to include publications, keynote speeches, or community influence is a missed opportunity.

Thought leadership is an essential aspect of professional development and can greatly enhance your personal brand. It showcases your expertise, knowledge, and unique perspective on industry trends and topics.

When crafting your CV, make sure to include any thought leadership activities you have been involved in. This could include speaking engagements at conferences or events, writing for publications or blogs, participating in panel discussions, or even actively engaging with others on social media platforms.

Including these experiences not only highlights your credibility and industry influence but also demonstrates your passion and commitment to continuous learning and growth.

In addition to highlighting past thought leadership activities, consider discussing any ongoing or future projects that align with your personal brand and career goals. This could include writing a book, launching a podcast, or volunteering for a cause you are passionate about.

Remember, thought leadership is not just about self-promotion but also about sharing valuable insights and knowledge with others. So, as you build your personal brand and establish yourself as a thought leader in your industry, continue to engage in meaningful conversations and contribute to the growth of your sector.

### 13. Downplaying People Management Skills

Leadership is about teams. Failing to share experience in managing, mentoring, or developing talent can raise questions about your suitability.

While technical expertise and knowledge may be important in your role, being able to effectively manage and develop people is equally crucial. As you progress in your career, make sure to highlight any experience or skills you have in team building, coaching, and mentorship. Showcasing these people management abilities will not only demonstrate your leadership qualities but also show that you are invested in the growth and development of others.

### 14. Relying on Outdated Leadership Approaches

Employers value adaptability. Highlight modern skills like digital transformation knowledge or experience fostering inclusive initiatives. This will demonstrate your ability to stay current and lead with innovation.

It is essential for leaders to be adaptable and open-minded. Employers are looking for individuals who can bring fresh perspectives and embrace new technologies, processes and ways of thinking.

Highlighting any experience or skills you have in digital transformation, particularly the use and understanding of AI will help elevate you as a candidate. This could include implementing new software systems, leading remote teams, or utilising social media platforms for business growth.

Many employers are still placing a strong emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. By showing your understanding and dedication to promoting diversity within the workplace, you will demonstrate your ability to lead with empathy and inclusivity.

### 15. Failing to Demonstrate Innovation

The best candidates are problem-solvers. If your application lacks examples of innovative solutions you've led or been involved in, you may not resonate as a forward-thinking candidate. Whether it's streamlining processes, implementing new technologies, or developing creative strategies you must highlight your ability to innovate.

Innovation is key to staying ahead of the competition. Employers are looking for people who can bring fresh ideas and approaches. Therefore, it is important to highlight any instances in your career where you have taken an innovative approach to problem-solving or implemented new ideas that have led to positive outcomes.

Moreover, as companies continue to adapt and evolve in response to changing market trends and customer needs, being able to demonstrate a strong track record of innovation will set you apart as a valuable asset.

### 16. Misjudging the Tone of Your Cover Letter

New roles can often require a mix of professionalism and persuasion. Being overly formal or underwhelming can make your interview memorable for the wrong reasons.

It's important to strike the right balance between professionalism and persuasion when constructing a cover letter. Being too formal can make you come across as unapproachable or rigid, while being underwhelming can leave a lackluster impression on the hiring manager.

To avoid misjudging the tone of your cover letter, it's important to research the company culture and industry norms. This will give you a better understanding of how formal or casual your language should be.

Additionally, tailor your tone to match the values and mission of the company you're applying to. This shows that you've put effort into understanding their brand and are genuinely interested in joining their team.

### 17. Too Much Focus on Hard Skills

Soft skills, such as emotional intelligence and adaptability, are critical at all levels. Overemphasis on technical proficiencies can make you seem one-dimensional. Instead, focus on your ability to work well with others, lead teams, and handle challenging situations. Highlighting specific examples of how you've used soft skills in past roles can demonstrate your potential as a strong candidate and future team member.

Furthermore, it's important to note that hard skills can be learned and developed over time, but soft skills are often innate traits that require constant refinement. Companies look for individuals who can not only do the job but also bring valuable interpersonal skills to the table. By highlighting both your technical abilities and soft skills, you'll present yourself as a well-rounded candidate.

### 18. Focussing only on advertised jobs

In today's highly competitive job market you must avoid getting stuck applying to advertised jobs and relying on recruiters.

#### Proactively Reach Out to Companies

Identify companies you admire or that align with your career goals. Research their mission, values, and recent projects, then craft a personalised message to express your interest. Highlight how your skills and experiences can contribute to their success, even if they don't have a job posting. The key here is to connect with leaders in the business outside of recruitment and HR.

#### Leverage Your Network

Many jobs are filled through referrals. Let your network know you're looking for a new role and the type of role you're seeking. Attend industry events, join professional groups, and connect with people on LinkedIn. A casual conversation or introduction can lead to unexpected opportunities.

#### Engage on Social Media

Follow companies and industry leaders on platforms like LinkedIn or Twitter. Engage with their content by commenting thoughtfully or sharing insights. This can help you get noticed and build relationships with decision-makers.

#### Stay Visible and Active

Update your LinkedIn profile to reflect your skills and career aspirations. Use keywords relevant to your industry so recruiters can find you. Share articles, post updates, or even write about your expertise to showcase your knowledge and enthusiasm.

#### Speak to Your Clients and Vendors

Clients and vendors have their ear to the ground and often hear about potential job openings before they are advertised. These contacts are part of your network but often overlooked by people. Approach the clients and vendors where you have established the closest relationships in the first instance.

### 19. Failing to Address Leadership Style

Companies want to know how you manage people and handle challenges. If your leadership approach isn't clear, it leaves gaps in understanding your fit. Make sure to mention your leadership style in your CV and be

ready to discuss it during interviews. This will give the hiring manager a better understanding of how you work with others and how you handle difficult situations.

Many companies value different leadership styles, so it's important to showcase yours and demonstrate how it aligns with their values. For example, if the company prioritises collaboration and teamwork, highlight your experience leading diverse teams and promoting a collaborative environment. If they emphasise adaptability and problem-solving, include examples of how you have successfully navigated challenging situations while leading a team.

Remember to also address any potential weaknesses or areas for improvement in your leadership style. Nobody is perfect but showing self-awareness and a willingness to learn and grow can demonstrate strong leadership potential. If you don't currently have leadership responsibility you can should start thinking about what type of leader you want to be and the style of leadership you might want to adopt in the future.

## 20. Submitting Overly Dense Applications

Be concise while ensuring your impact shines through. Highlight your achievements and relevant experience, and use clear, direct language.

In addition to avoiding jargon, make sure that your application is easy to read and visually appealing. Use bullet points and headings to break up long paragraphs of text. This will not only make it easier for recruiters to scan your application quickly, but it will also show that you are able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats.

## 21. Avoiding Mentorship Achievements

If you've helped people grow, include it! This reflects well on your ability to lead and inspire others. You can mention specific instances where you provided guidance or mentored someone in their personal development. By communicating your mentorship achievements, you demonstrate your dedication to developing others and your ability to positively influence those around you.

Mentorship plays a significant role in the success of an organisation. By highlighting your mentorship achievements, you emphasise the importance of nurturing talent within the workplace. This will undoubtedly impress potential employers and show that you are invested in the growth and development of others.

Including mentorship achievements on your application for a position may also open up opportunities for you to take on mentoring roles in your new role. This can be a great way to expand your skills and contribute to the success of the organisation in a different capacity.

Mentorship is not just valuable for those being mentored, but also for the mentors themselves. As a mentor, you can learn from your mentees and gain fresh perspectives on various topics. This continuous learning and growth will not only benefit your personal development but also make you an even more effective leader in the future.

## 22. Lack of Global Perspective

If you've worked internationally or managed global teams, be sure to feature that prominently on your CV. It demonstrates an understanding of different cultures, the ability to adapt and communicate effectively across languages and time zones, and a global perspective that is highly valued in today's interconnected world.

Not only does having international experience show a willingness to step out of your comfort zone and take on new challenges, it also highlights your ability to work in diverse environments and collaborate with people from different backgrounds.

Working in an international setting allows you to gain valuable insights into global markets, trends, and consumer behaviours. This knowledge can be translated into strategic decision-making within your organisation. Employers are looking for people who can think beyond their own borders and understand the bigger picture - including potential risks and opportunities.

### **23. Focusing Only on Past Success**

Failing to convey how your skills align with the company's future is a big mistake. It is important to not only highlight your past successes but also discuss how you plan to continue growing and adapting in the changing business landscape. This will demonstrate your ability to be forward-thinking and adaptable, which are qualities employers are searching for.

Encouraging others to set goals and develop a plan for their own future growth can help them become more self-aware and proactive in their career development. By discussing both past successes and future plans, you can showcase the importance of continual learning and professional improvement.

### **24. Disregarding Succession Planning Experience**

Organisations value people who can build a pipeline of future talent, so include examples of succession planning initiatives or your contribution to attracting top talent. This could be identifying and nurturing potential successors, creating development programs for high-potential employees, or even personally mentoring individuals who show high potential.

It is also important to acknowledge any gaps in your succession planning experience and how you plan to address them. This shows self-awareness and a desire to continuously improve in this aspect of leadership.

Highlighting your ability to adapt and pivot during unexpected changes in leadership can also showcase your resilience and strategic thinking skills. This can include instances where you stepped into an interim leadership role and successfully led the team through a transition.

### **25. Not Showcasing Financial Acumen**

As you progress in your career you must be able to effectively manage financial resources and make strategic decisions that positively impact the company's bottom line. If you haven't had direct experience with P&L or budget management, find ways to highlight your understanding of financial principles and your ability to make data-driven decisions.

For example, if you have experience managing projects, mention how you successfully allocated resources and stayed within budget constraints. This shows an understanding of financial responsibility and the ability to prioritise tasks based on available resources. You can also mention any cost-saving initiatives you have implemented in previous roles or how you have improved operational efficiencies that resulted in financial gains for the company.

Additionally, consider obtaining certifications or taking courses related to finance.

### **26. Poor Visual Presentation**

A CV shouldn't have formatting mistakes or an outdated design. Polished, clean layouts show sophistication. Consider using a modern CV template to showcase your skills and experience in a visually appealing manner.

Lastly, make sure to proofread your CV multiple times and have someone else review it for any spelling or grammar errors. These mistakes can make the overall presentation appear unprofessional and decrease your chances of getting noticed by potential employers.

Creating a good CV requires attention to detail, strategic thinking, and a professional tone. Create a strong and impressive CV that will help you stand out in the competitive job market. Remember to make it achievement focused, prioritise relevant skills and experiences, and present your information in a visually appealing style.

## 27. Skipping Adaptability Examples

The business world is unpredictable. Highlight any examples where you've navigated change or crises successfully.

Adaptability is a critical skill in today's evolving business landscape. Employers are looking for candidates who can handle change and uncertainty with grace and resilience. Here are some examples of how you can demonstrate your adaptability:

Discuss a time when you had to take on new responsibilities or switch roles unexpectedly, and how you adapted to the change.

Share a situation where you had to solve a problem with limited resources or faced unexpected challenges, and how you adjusted your approach to overcome it.

Mention any experience working in a fast-paced environment where priorities often changed, and how you managed to stay organized and focused.

Talk about a project or task that required you to learn new skills or technologies, and how you approached the learning process.

Highlight any instances where you had to step out of your comfort zone and take on a new role or task, and how it helped you grow personally and professionally.

It is not uncommon for individuals to be faced with unexpected changes and challenges. These can range from taking on new responsibilities or roles within a company, to solving problems with limited resources or navigating through a fast-paced work culture. Think of examples you can share on the CV or during interviews that demonstrate how you have navigated change by adapting swiftly.

## 28. Failing to Mention Board Experience

Organizations value boardroom exposure. Whether as a member or partner, include relevant governance experience. Highlight your contributions and achievements while serving on a board, such as implementing new policies or strategic initiatives. This highlights how you can work collaboratively with others and make impactful decisions at a high level.

If you don't have any previous board experience, consider seeking out volunteer opportunities with non-profit organisations or smaller businesses where you can gain exposure to boardroom dynamics. This will not only enhance your CV but also broaden your understanding of business management and decision-making processes.

Incorporating board experience into your career development plan can also demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning and professional growth. It shows that you are willing to take on new challenges and responsibilities, which can make you stand out as a candidate for future board positions.

Moreover, serving on a board allows you to expand your professional network and connect with other influential individuals in your field. This networking opportunity can open doors for future collaborations and career opportunities.

### 29. Neglecting Endorsements or Testimonials

Quotes from colleagues or industry peers about your leadership can add an extra layer of credibility. Don't forget to include any endorsements or testimonials that back up your achievements. These can come from your peers, key stakeholders, or others who have worked closely with you during your career.

When including endorsements or testimonials, be sure to get permission from the individual before sharing. Including too many endorsements can also be overwhelming, so choose a few strong ones that highlight the most appropriate skills and achievements for the role you're pursuing.

Don't underestimate the power of social proof. Endorsements and testimonials can add credibility to your professional profile and make you stand out from other candidates.

### 30. Underestimating Employee Retention Results

Retention is a telltale sign of effective leadership. Discuss initiatives that boosted employee satisfaction or reduced turnover. Mention specific strategies, such as implementing flexible work arrangements or creating a culture of recognition and appreciation. Share numbers to demonstrate the positive impact on retention rates and how it ultimately benefits the company.

Retaining top talent is crucial for any successful organisation.

Employee retention demonstrates how you prioritise the well-being and satisfaction of your team members. In turn, this can also attract potential new hires who want to work for a company that values and invests in its employees.

Investing in employee retention can lead to cost savings for the company. The process of recruiting, hiring, and training new employees can be time-consuming and expensive. By focusing on retaining your current employees, you can reduce these costs and allocate resources towards other important areas of the business.

Having a high employee retention rate positively impacts the overall morale and productivity of your team. When employees feel valued and supported by their organisation, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their work. This ultimately leads to higher levels of productivity and better results for the company.

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