

Make an Impact in a Challenging Market

Job Search Tips from an IT Recruiter

With all the challenges today's IT job seekers face, it's hard to remember the opportunity-rich job market technology professionals enjoyed in the mid-to-late 1990s. Where once hiring bonuses and high salaries were the norm, now techies find tremendous competition for jobs, fewer opportunities and lower compensation ranges. IT candidate pools have reached unprecedented levels in many areas of specialization, which makes it harder than ever for job seekers to get noticed, interviewed and hired.

Diversify Your Skills

Additional skills, aside from those required for the job, can increase your allure and value to potential employers. As a technology professional, it is crucial to keep current with the latest technologies and constantly increase your skill base. Take the time to get certified, especially for high-demand skills.

Write Standout Cover Letters

It may sound elementary, but it is astonishing how many cover letters riddled with grammar errors and spelling mistakes end up on a recruiter's desk. Your letter is an example of your skills as a business professional, not to mention your first impression as a candidate. Make it a good one.

- Customize your cover letter to each employer and job.
- Use spell check and have a friend, mentor or business associate proofread the letter.
- Communicate articulately and concisely why you are the right candidate for the job.
- In the first paragraph address the most important job criteria. If they need specific experience or skills that you have, address it right away.
- Be sure to mention specific accomplishments that will grab the employer's attention.
- Finish the letter with a request for an interview and give your contact information so employers can reach you.

Remember: A great letter will set you apart from the crowd as most job seekers are not paying enough attention to creating quality cover letters.

Present a Professional Resume

The key to an outstanding resume is cutting out the fluff. Make sure every word you write is dedicated to highlighting your professional qualifications: job experience, skills, training and noteworthy, relevant achievements. Bullets are a great tool to help you keep information concise and attention grabbing. Don't expect recruiters to lose time with a wordy, poorly formatted and confusing resume. Most will discard a clumsy resume rather than take extra time to hunt for a job match in a sub-par package.

As an IT professional, you and your resume need to immediately stand out from the swelling crowd. But because recruiters are overwhelmed with resumes, you have about 30 seconds to communicate your qualifications, differentiate yourself as a potential employee and peak a recruiter's interest.

To outline your expertise and catch the recruiter's eye, a little creativity, a lot of professionalism and sharp attention to detail can go a long way.

Just as with your cover letters, customize your resume each time you apply for a position. That way the skills and experiences most important to the employer stand out. Start your resume with a short explanation of why you are the right candidate for the advertised position. Recruiters are scanning your resumes very quickly to figure that out. Provide that information up front and save your personal interests and career objectives for the interview or near the end of the resume.

Keep in Touch

If a recruiter responds favorably to your resume, don't be afraid to show persistence. While the frequency of your follow-up contacts—and the method of communication—will vary according to your individual taste and judgment, efforts should be made weekly, as long as you are getting favorable responses.

Whether or not you get the position, if you click with a recruiter, check in periodically. Recruiters have their fingers on the pulse of a job market. A good impression goes a long way and can open doors and lead to unexpected, worthwhile opportunities.

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