

GET THE JOB

Why First Impressions Count

What Hiring Managers Often Notice Before They Ever Meet You

In the first moments of a job search, many employers meet an applicant through a screen. A resume arrives through an applicant tracking system, a cover letter is opened on a laptop and a hiring manager makes quick decisions about what to read next.

That early review is not always a full, line-by-line study. Recruiters and hiring managers often start by scanning for signals that a candidate meets the role's basic requirements and can communicate clearly in a workplace setting.

FIT, CLARITY, BASICS

One of the first things employers notice is whether a resume matches the job posting. Job descriptions commonly spell out required experience, skills, certifications or education. When those elements are easy to find, the application tends to be simpler to evaluate.

Clarity matters as much as content. Hiring managers often read many applications in a short time, so clean formatting, consistent dates and clear job titles reduce friction. Typos and broken spacing can stand out because they make a



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document harder to trust, even when the experience is strong.

Details that seem small can also influence first impressions. A professional email address, a reachable phone number and an updated city and state help employers move quickly if they want to schedule a call.

WORK HISTORY SIGNALS

Employers also look for patterns in work history. A steady

progression in responsibilities can help show readiness for the next step, while gaps or short tenures are usually read in context. Many hiring teams have become more accustomed to nontraditional paths, including career changes, periods of caregiving and layoffs.

What tends to help is straightforward explanation when it is appropriate and a focus on results. Concrete achievements, such as improving a process, managing a bud-

get or hitting a production goal, are easier to evaluate than vague descriptions. For roles that require teamwork, hiring managers may also look for signs of collaboration, training or leadership, even in informal settings.

ONLINE PRESENCE CHECKS

For many employers, a candidate's online presence is part of the screening process. LinkedIn profiles are often

reviewed because they can confirm employment dates, job titles and professional networks. Consistency between a resume and an online profile helps build confidence that details were not overstated.

Public posts can also shape impressions, especially when they conflict with workplace expectations. Many companies have social media policies and conduct guidelines, and hiring managers may be alert for content that could create issues with customers or coworkers.

A STRONG START

References and recommendations usually come later, but early signals still matter. A resume that names the right tools, includes current training and uses plain language can help a candidate reach the interview stage.

For job seekers, the take-away is practical: make it easy for an employer to say yes to the next step. A focused resume aligned with the role, clear writing and consistent details help hiring managers see the person behind the application and move from screening to conversation.