

# GET THE JOB

## Standing Out In Today's Market

### Practical Ways to Differentiate Yourself Beyond the Resume

**H**iring can move fast, and many applicants look similar on paper. A strong resume still matters, but employers often make decisions based on signals that do not fit neatly into a one-page document. In a crowded job market, job seekers can improve their odds by making it easy for organizations to understand their skills, their work style and the value they can bring from day one.

One place to start is clarity. Recruiters and hiring managers frequently scan applications quickly, so candidates who define what they do and what roles they are targeting can reduce confusion. A short headline at the top of a resume, a consistent job title on LinkedIn and a focused cover letter all help show direction.

#### **PROOF OF WORK**

A resume describes results, but work samples show them. Depending on the field, that might mean a portfolio website, a GitHub repository, a writing link, a project summary or a short case study that explains the problem, the approach and the outcome. Concrete evidence helps employers move from wondering whether someone can do the job to seeing



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how they think.

For candidates without a long work history, class projects, volunteer work and personal projects can still demonstrate job-ready skills. The key is to provide context and to explain individual responsibility, tools used and what was learned. When possible, tie the work sample to the employer's needs using the same language found in the job posting.

#### **COMMUNICATION COUNTS**

Many roles depend on clear communication, and interviews often test it more than applicants realize. Job seekers can stand out by preparing a simple story about their work using a basic structure: the situation, the task, the action and the result. This approach helps candidates stay specific while avoiding long answers that drift.

Written communication also plays a role. Employers notice whether emails confirm time zones, include needed details and stay professional. A short thank-you note after an interview can reinforce interest and highlight one relevant point from the conversation without overselling.

#### **NETWORKS AND REFERRALS**

Referrals remain a com-

mon way employers find candidates, and networking does not have to be formal. Informational interviews, alumni connections and community groups can help applicants learn how organizations actually hire and what they value. A brief message that is respectful of time, references a shared connection and asks one clear question is more likely to get a response.

Candidates can also strengthen their visibility by engaging thoughtfully on professional platforms. Sharing an article with a short takeaway, commenting with a useful observation or posting a small project update can show interest in the field and build familiarity over time.

Standing out is often less about flash and more about reducing uncertainty for the employer. When job seekers present a clear target, provide proof of work and communicate with care, they make it easier for hiring teams to say yes. In an economy built on skills and service, that kind of preparation reflects well on both applicants and the workplaces ready to welcome them.