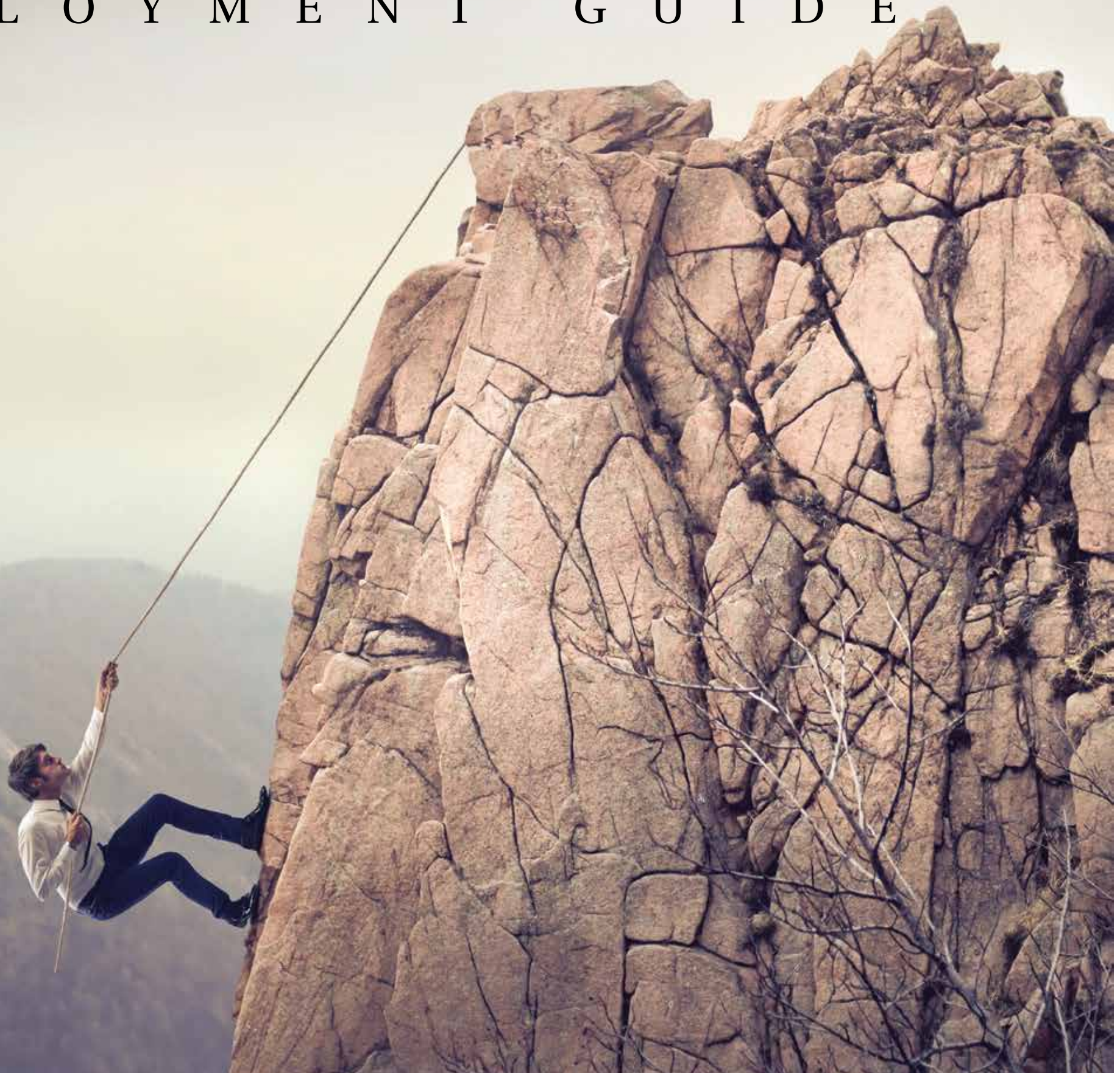


Get the Job

E M P L O Y M E N T G U I D E



Avoiding Jargon

You might be a seasoned, effective team leader who meets and exceeds goals and is detail-oriented. But it might not be such a good idea to describe yourself with those overused words on a resume.

Resume writing has a tendency to follow a set pattern of narrow, trendy vocabulary, but if you're not careful, your resume can end up using a lot of big words that don't really say anything about you.

To help your message cut through the clutter, here are some tips for avoiding resume writing jargon.

USE NATURAL LANGUAGE

The business world has a habit of overusing some words to the point that they become meaningless.

Instead of filling your résumé with popular buzzwords — “actionable,” “outside the box,” “synergy” and the like — set yourself apart by writing in a clear, concise, easily understandable tone.

You want to tout your specific accomplishments that will make you stand out from other job applicants. Use exact numbers and figures where possible, and use your resume as a chance to tell brief but engaging stories about what skills you can bring to the organization.

Instead of simply calling yourself “detail-oriented,” give a specific example that proves it.

FOCUS ON ACTION

Unless you're applying to be an English professor, your employer probably doesn't care about your vocabulary. Your résumé and job interview should put the spotlight on what you have accomplished, not the



big, flowery words you may have learned along the way.

Think about the things you've done in previous jobs. What are you most proud of? Use your resume to tell about things you've actually accomplished, which means going beyond merely describing yourself as the ideal job candidate.

READ IT OUT LOUD

If you're not sure about the wording

on your résumé, try reading it out loud.

If it doesn't sound natural when spoken, it's probably not going to leave a good impression with your future boss.

Keep the writing simple and conversational to get your point across clearly. The more awkward, overused words you choose to use, the less likely your resume will stand apart from the others in the pile.

JOB TIPS

Prepare for a job search

If the job market of the past few years has taught Americans anything, it's that we should always be prepared for the possibility of layoffs. Whether thinking about career advancement or just planning for the worst, it's smart to prepare now in case an employment change could be coming in the future.

First, Know Yourself

Finding the right job takes more than luck and tenacity. Sure, hard work is a requirement for any successful career, but you're much more likely to succeed if you find a company that's a good long-term fit for your career goals.

It's a popular saying, but it's very true: If you find a job you love, you'll never work a day in your life.

The most successful careers often start with something you're passionate about. And to find a good match for your skills and interests in the workforce, you've got to look first inside yourself.

GET HONEST FEEDBACK

Sometimes it's hard to see yourself in the same light that others see you. Ask your friends, family and co-workers how you present yourself professionally and what you can do to improve the image you portray.

It's a tough conversation to have — and certainly not one you can have with just anyone — but it can help you get insights that you never would have thought of on your own.

You can also practice job interview skills with another person who can serve as your coach. They should be someone you trust to give you honest advice about what you need to work on. It might be how you speak, how you look or how you use body language, but clear feedback from another person — preferably someone who is a good example of professionalism themselves — can be very valuable.

POINT OUT YOUR PROGRESS

Employers are probably going to ask about your weaknesses. Be prepared not only with a good, clear answer, but also

with concrete ways you've overcome your personality flaws.

They don't just want to know what kind of skills they're getting, but the methods you take to improve your value to the company, too.

For example, if you're a naturally shy person, you can bring up concrete stories about steps you've taken to communicate better with your co-workers. Maybe you volunteered to organize a local fundraiser or took a speech class in college. While no employee is perfect, employers do want to see things you're doing to improve on your skill set.

KNOW WHERE YOU SHINE

If you're really good at one particular skill — such as organization, project planning or creativity — don't be shy about pointing that out and giving specific examples of how it has helped you in similar jobs in the past.

You need to truly understand where your strengths lie and be able to articulate that clearly and confidently when given the chance.

Some people might see that as bragging, but it's perfectly appropriate in a job interview. If you're good at something, don't be shy about it. Bring it up. Show your potential employer what you bring to the table.

By knowing yourself, you'll be much more likely to find a job that makes you happy for the long term.



Being 'Overqualified'

America's slow-growth economy in the past few years has led to a job market where experienced, well-educated people may find themselves looking for entry-level jobs.

Whether you're seeking to start a new career — which often means re-starting at the bottom of the corporate ladder — or just need a lower-level position to pay the bills, here are some tips for people who find themselves described as “overqualified” for a job.

COMMIT TO THE LONG HAUL

When an employer labels you as overqualified, they're really saying they're worried about how long you'll stick around.

They don't want the expense or hassle of replacing you after a short period of time. Make it clear that you're willing to commit to a long term at the job — in writing, if necessary — and that they don't have to worry about you leaving after a year or two.

RELISH THE CHALLENGE

When a job candidate has plenty of experience, even at higher-level positions, the potential employer might also worry whether a lower-level

job would provide enough of a challenge to keep you engaged.

Stress how much you'll enjoy the challenges of the new job, and include lots of specific examples of goals you would like to set and ways you can raise the bar for yourself.

DON'T KNOCK THE SALARY

Finally, your future employer may worry that you won't be satisfied with a lower pay rate.

Emphasize that you aren't as interested in the money as you are in the challenge of the new job, and be honest about it. You want them to know you're focused on working for the right company in an enjoyable position, not just the size of your paycheck.

If you think your employer might have some qualms about your step down the career ladder, do everything you can to make sure they know you're serious, committed and could do a great job for them.

An honest, heart-to-heart explanation of why you want the job can do a lot to calm their fears.

JOB TIPS

Update your résumé

Even if you're currently employed, it's important to have an up-to-date résumé that gives a short overview of your accomplishments. It could come in handy years later when, under stress, you may have a hard time remembering some of your impressive achievements.

Think about references

When the time comes to switch jobs, who can provide the best perspective about what you've accomplished? You should think about the people who could vouch for your skills in the workplace — and always ask them for permission before you list them as a reference on a résumé.

Tackling Phone Interviews

While face-to-face interviews are still the norm, your first step in the door to many companies may be over the telephone.

Phone interviews are becoming more common as companies recruit from geographically diverse areas, often wanting to pre-screen candidates over the phone before paying for travel or taking up a hiring manager's time.

If you find yourself needing to conduct a phone interview, here are a few tips.

USE A WIRED PHONE

Even the best cell phones can drop calls at inopportune times, and few calls are more important than over-the-phone job interviews.

If you don't have a wired phone line at your home, see if you can borrow one from a friend or neighbor. Traditional telephones are more reliable and usually have a better sound quality than their wireless counterparts, so don't leave anything to chance.

HAVE CONFIDENCE

For most jobs, the worst thing you can do on a phone interview is to sound timid, quiet or shy.

The hiring manager will be judging you based entirely on



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your voice and how you answer questions verbally, so practice beforehand so you can give bold, confident answers over the phone. You should do your best to come across as an intelligent, articulate person.

DON'T BE COCKY

At the same time, over-

confidence can become a problem.

If you sound like a know-it-all, people won't want to work with you — and chances are the boss won't want to hire you, either. You want to sound smart and capable, but not to the point that you look like a jerk.

It can be a tough balanc-

ing act for some people, depending on their personality. You want to be bold and clear about your accomplishments, but you don't want to brag about yourself to the point of being rude. The lack of real, face-to-face communication can make your job even tougher because you can't see how the interview-

er is responding to your answers.

A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

Remember not to chew gum, drink, eat or smoke during the phone interview. Even though you may have nervous habits, you need to project your very best image on the phone.

You'll also want to speak clearly and give short answers because no one likes to hear someone ramble endlessly about themselves. Practice speaking in sentences that are short and to-the-point, and make sure you leave time for the interviewer to talk and ask questions thoroughly. You shouldn't talk over them.

JOB TIPS

Get info before an interview

Before you go into a job interview, it's important that you find some information about the company you might be working for. You want to understand the basics of what the company does and how your job would fit into that mission.

Plan Ahead: A Smart Move

The perfect job will never fall straight into your lap. If you want to get hired, it takes some planning and legwork.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Before you have an interview — or even apply for a job — you need to understand the job and company you want to work for.

You should have a basic understanding of what the job entails and know how your background helps the employer meet their needs. If you don't know what makes the company tick, why would they want to hire you?

It also helps to have a personal connection at the company. The vast majority of people who get hired these days already know someone at the business they plan to work for.

"It's all about who you know," some people will say, and there's truth to that.

In the modern job search, where thousands of resumes can electronically land on the desk of a hiring manager, it helps if there is someone inside the company who can say, "This person is worth talking to."

ASK THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

Be prepared with some probing questions of your own.

Every candidate wants to

JOB TIPS

Always say thanks

Your mom will love this tip. After you've had contact with a potential employer — and especially after a job interview — it's important to say thanks for considering you for the job. Not only does it keep you up front in the future boss' mind, but it's just the polite thing to do.

know about the pay package, of course, but you can set yourself apart with thoughtful questions that show how well you understand the job and

the company.

Employers can tell a lot from the kinds of questions you ask, so show them you're ready to move beyond the

obvious and get to work right away.

BRING POLISHED MATERIALS

Buying expensive, fancy paper for your resume does no good if it's filled with typos.

You want to make sure the materials you bring to the interview — whether folders, portfolios or printouts — are all well organized, relevant

and polished looking, filled with the kind of high-quality information that matches the clean display.

Your materials should be like a gift for the employer, with pretty packaging on the outside and an even better surprise when they look inside.

By planning ahead and creating a presentation package that's worthy of their attention, you'll have a better chance of landing your dream job.

Planning
= Success
Strategy



Gaps in Your Resume?

Not everyone works a full-time job their entire life. Many people find themselves with gaps in their resume — breaks between employment for a wide variety of reasons, from layoffs to personal choices.

Some hiring managers see these gaps as a problem. If you've had a lot of breaks from your work, they'll wonder why you couldn't keep a job and would assume that you're not going to last at their company.

Having breaks in your employment record isn't necessarily a bad thing, though. You might have been highly skilled and a great employee but, for whatever reason, didn't need or want a job at the time. Some things in life are more important than work, after all.

Here are some things to think about.

BE CLEAR ABOUT THE REASON

When there are gaps in your resume, there's usually a good reason, and you shouldn't hesitate to point that out.

Employers don't need to know all the drama and details about it — just a reasonable explanation for why you were out of work for a period of time.

If you don't have a logical, concise answer, it will raise red flags. If you do, it will give them some comfort about it.

FOCUS ON YEARS

One way to direct the focus away from the employment gaps is to focus your resume on your total years of experience in the industry, not necessarily the specific dates of employment.

Probing questions from the interviewer may force you to be more specific about it, but you don't need to intentionally shine a spotlight on your

JOB TIPS

Don't be too pushy

Different employers follow all different time scales for hiring workers, so never assume that you'll hear back from them within a few days. Some companies may make a hiring decision in 24 hours while others could take months to fill a job. Following up too often or too soon could be irritating.

periods of unemployment.

SHOW OTHER EXPERIENCE

When people are unemployed, they aren't sitting around doing nothing.

Did you do consulting work? Try starting your own business? Devote more time to your favorite volunteer groups? Take time off to care for an aging parent?

If you explain what you were actually doing, it could turn those gaps into positives for the future employer.

If the skills you gained during those gaps could be applied to your new job, that's even better.

Taking time off to raise a child, for example, might have helped you discover new skills or interests. Designing the newsletter for your local PTA could easily translate into designing a company newsletter.

If your interests and hobbies led to any new skills you could use in the workplace, be sure to highlight those in a job interview.



Tips on Staying Motivated

It's easy to get discouraged when you've been looking for work, especially if you haven't had much luck. But unemployment doesn't last forever.



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It's important to keep a positive outlook and stay motivated when searching for your next job. In fact, some people turn a stint of unemployment into a great opportunity, finding an even better job than they left.

It can become a stepping stone to better things in your future, but you've got to stay motivated to keep working at the job hunt.

LOOK FOR SUCCESS STORIES

Scour the Internet and talk to colleagues about success stories because it can motivate you and teach you something about job-search strategies that work.

Networking can also be a great way to hear about positive outcomes for people's career paths.

If you have a friend on Facebook or a colleague on LinkedIn who just got hired for a new job, send them a congratulatory note or give them a phone call. You may be able to pick up some pointers for what worked in their job search.

It can also help you see what's working in the job market. If your friend just got hired at XYZ Corporation, they might be looking to hire someone with your skills, too.

Spend time with people who are having success in their careers and try to mimic what they do. If they're getting promotions and better jobs, there's a good reason for it. Find out their secret to success.

CHANGE YOUR ROUTINE

If you've been doing the same thing

JOB TIPS

Follow the instructions

When you read a job ad, pay attention to how the hiring manager wants to be contacted. If they ask for résumés by e-mail, they probably prefer computer communications. If they specify "no phone calls," you'd be better off following up with a letter. Employers need to know you can follow instructions.

over and over while continuing to get the same results, it's time to change your habits.

Instead of posting your résumé online, go knock on doors downtown. Instead of scouring the Internet for ads, look in the newspaper or call a person who works in your industry.

People say the definition of crazy is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results.

Don't be crazy. If you want different results, you've got to do different things, so experiment until you find a career plan that works.

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES

Even when you haven't landed a job, there are still rays of hope you can look forward to. Did you get a phone interview? Did you discover a new source of job leads? Did you "almost" get your dream job?

Think about what led to those little successes and try to emulate them until you get the job you want.