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Summary:

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Article Body:

The most common mistake made by people who attempt to put together their first resume is that they put in too much information. They want to describe everything that they have ever done from the moment of conception to the present. The resume ends up being too long, and nobody will read it.

The most important piece of information that you should retain is that your resume, no matter how well it is put together, will only get a 15 to 30 second review by the person who does the initial screening.

That person is normally someone in Human Resources whose job is to look at hundreds of resumes per day. You must create your resume in such a way that it gives all the information they need in a maximum of 30 seconds.

There is information that, under most circumstances, should not be in a resume. This includes:

- Your age or date of birth
- Religious or political affiliations
- Reasons why you left your last job
- Your Social Security Number
- Health restrictions or physical limitations
- Any sentence that has "do not," "cannot," or "unable"

Age or Date of Birth

I repeat, you should not put your age or date of birth in a resume. In the US,

an employer has no legal right to know your age. An employer can ask you only if you are over the age of 18 for insurance liability reasons or if local, state, or federal law requires that employees be over a certain age.

Therefore, if you're concerned that your age will be a factor, don't list the date you graduated from high school or the years that you received any of your degrees. I received my undergraduate degree in 1962. Can any of you guess my age?

Religious Affiliations or Political Affiliations

It's generally recommended that you stay away from listing a particular type of religion or political party affiliation. However, being active in your community or church can sometimes be a positive factor in many large companies, so you should make general statements about your participation in activities that support the community. Volunteer work for a charity group would be a positive example but active support for an environmental group could raise some eyebrows.

Reasons for Leaving Previous Jobs

We've become a mobile society and longevity in a position is now considered two years. People accept new jobs for many reasons. If you left your last job because of differences with your supervisor or company philosophy, I don't recommend that you put that information in your resume. The reader will probably get a negative impression of you. If you couldn't get along with your last company, you probably won't get along here.

If the job application asks you to give reasons for leaving your last job, a safe and truthful answer could be that you were offered a better position. "Better" could mean a pay raise, better working hours, better office environment, or newer equipment.

Your Social Security Number (SSN)

The exceptions to this are federal resumes sent for civil service positions. A prospective employer can ask for your Social Security Number in an application - that is normally a requirement for employment. However, putting your SSN on a resume could lead to disaster.

You'll be sending out many resumes; you won't know who'll be reading them. It doesn't cost much money to put a small want ad in the newspaper or on an Internet employment site, and a dishonest person can run a fraudulent ad.

If someone knows your SSN, he can apply for credit cards or other important

documents, such as duplicate SSN cards, with the information you normally provide on a resume. Be alert if someone other than in the civil service asks for your SSN.

Information about Health and Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act has changed the way businesses in the US recruit and hire an employee. Generally, an employer has no legal right to know your health status. The only health-related questions that an employer can ask are job related.

If the job description requires that you lift 50 lbs, the employer has the legal and legitimate right to ask in the interview if you can do this. He can also state the requirement in his ad. He cannot ask you if you have back problems, diabetes, or have had a heart attack unless the job, such as airline pilot, requires perfect health.

Find out your legal rights if you live outside the US.

Marital Status

I've added marital status because this is another issue that can work against you, particularly if you're a single parent. I know some people will disagree, but single parents have the highest absentee rate in the work force.

Companies will try to avoid hiring a single parent if at all possible. However, in the US they cannot ask you your marital status or if you have children. Don't volunteer this information on the resume.

If asked this question in an interview, the proper response could be, "Can you tell me what this has to do with the position I'm applying for?" That should end the questioning on this issue if the interviewer does not want to face a lawsuit.