



Looking beyond the resumé



Introduction

While there can be no doubt that resumés are necessary, it is becoming of increasing importance to consider other factors that don't align with this agreed structure. A successful hire is now based on more than just past experience and education. This eBook is designed to illustrate why a resumé cannot be taken as gospel. We will detail some of the key characteristics that any hiring manager worth their salt should be on the lookout for. And finally, we re-examine the interview, showing you how certain questions can illuminate important traits of top talent.

What a resumé can tell you
[> page 3](#)

The limitations of the resumé model
[> page 4](#)

Traits to spot outside the resumé
[> page 5](#)

How to use an interview to unearth alternative characteristics
[> page 8](#)

The final word
[> page 9](#)

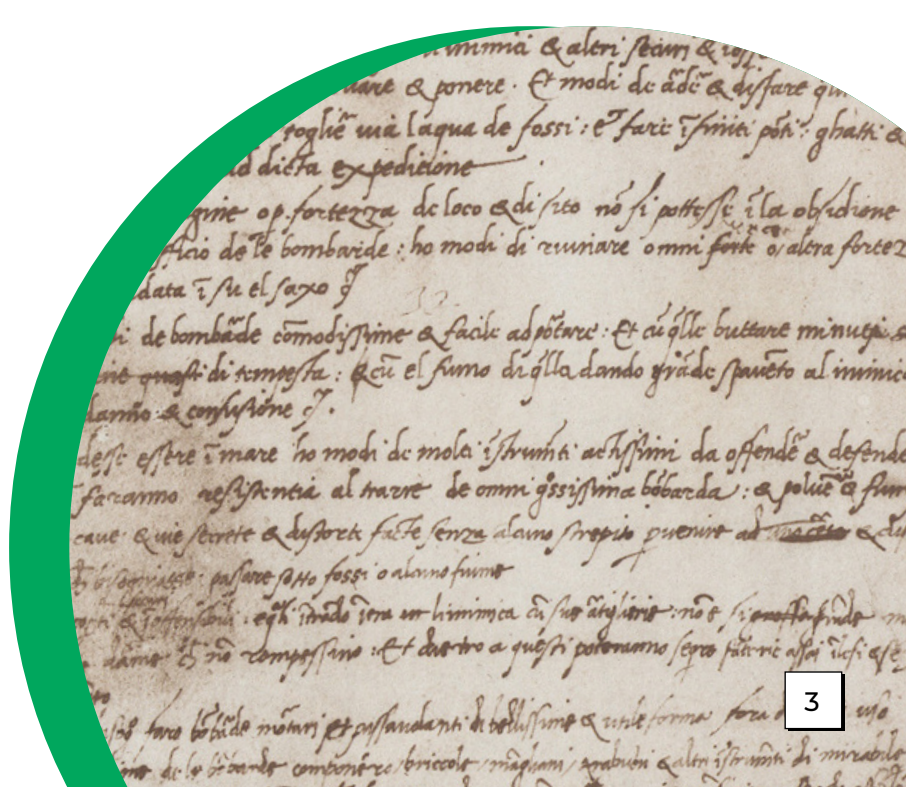


What a résumé can tell you

The first example of a résumé can be traced back as far as 1482, to Leonardo da Vinci. In a letter to Ludovico Sforza, the de facto ruler of Milan, da Vinci included a ten point list of his particular strengths and abilities in the hopes of securing employment. He succeeded. But it wasn't until the 1930s that the résumé became more commonplace. And while the contents have evolved somewhat over the years (we thankfully no longer need to give our weight, for example) the premise of the document has remained stalwart.

A résumé essentially comprises a candidate's vital statistics, all elegantly squashed into two A4 pages. It is a purely factual document. We know this information is important for recruiters. It gives us a fleeting snapshot at employment history, major skills and educational background. Generally speaking, these are three major barriers to a lot of positions. And as LinkedIn states: 'Your resume is your first point of contact with the employer and sets the tone.'

That doesn't mean an impressive résumé equates to an impressive candidate though. Humans are complex individuals and now, more than ever, it's so important to get a more complete insight on potential candidates. But so much seems to hinge on the résumé; they precariously hold a rather important key to career success. The amount of credence it's given is, quite literally, archaic.





The limitations of the resumé model

What is it that the resumé holds in highest esteem? Previous experience, perhaps. Maybe it's the list of educational achievements. Or that concise table of appropriate skills. These are all useful nuggets of information for any employer. However, they can't tell a complete story. Perhaps in decades gone by, when processes were simpler, it may have given a fuller picture. But the manner in which we acquire knowledge and experience has changed so much that having such an antiquated guide is only holding us back. According to [FastCompany](#), 85% of skills that are potentially relevant to a role are not present in resúmes. They don't have the breadth or space to encompass everything that top talent can potentially offer, even from this rudimentary point of view. And there are other shortcomings too:

- According to [Berke](#), 85% of candidates lie on their resúmes. And, as we know, bad data will absolutely result in a bad hire.
- Resúmes can also reinforce bias. [A recent study](#) found that distinctly African-American or Asian names receive 30-50% fewer callbacks compared to European-American names.
- With the prevalence of ATS, the resumé is at a fundamental disadvantage. These HR systems cannot track anything other than keywords and hard evidence.

While a resumé is generally the first hurdle in progressing through the hiring process, according to [Forbes](#), 53% of employers want to see more than this. The cost and time involved in making hires leaves little to serendipity. And with recruiters trying everything to wade through metaphorical towers of CVs and candidates shackled to the procedure, so much top talent is slipping through the cracks.

There is light at the end of this tunnel, however...



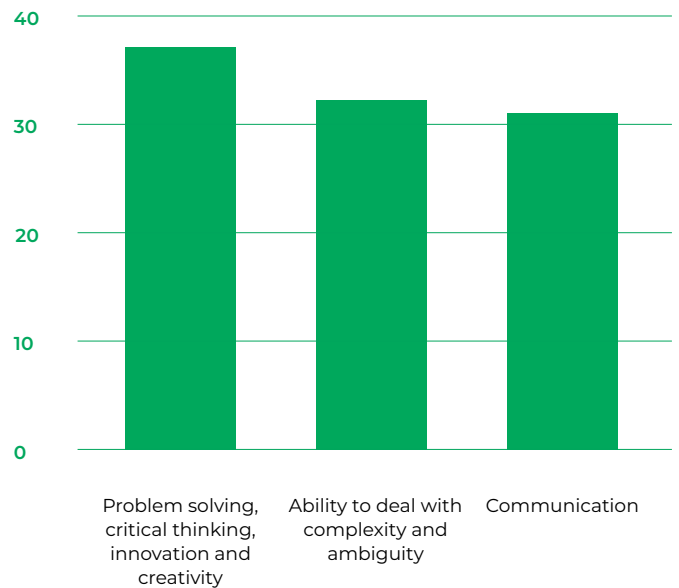
Traits to spot outside the resumé

Our goal isn't to entirely discredit the resumé and what it measures. It has its place. But you need to be more thorough. There are diamonds out there who do not fully subscribe to the norm. By not allowing for a more complex view of what a candidate should represent, you could be missing out.

Phone screens to identify soft skills

A [Mckinsey report](#) has indicated that soft skills are becoming much more crucial in the workforce. These intangible qualities are a complete antithesis to what the resumé craves. They cover things like social and emotional skills, empathy and awareness – traits that cannot be tracked in black and white, but are becoming the fundamental qualities that make top talent. In fact, in a [recent poll](#) with HR professionals they indicated the exact skills they're having trouble in recruiting.

Top three areas of missing soft skills, % of respondents



The problem is that these kinds of skills are difficult to pin down. An interview can certainly elicit more revealing insights (and we'll give guidance on this in a bit), but what about in the rounds before this? A short phone screening can help, anyway. It gives you a few minutes of direct human interaction allowing you to get more information of their character. You can even have some specific questions ready to probe the particular soft skills you value. Looking at secondary sources, like blogs and social media, can also give a touch more clarity. But these need to be taken with a pinch of salt; they can be just as curated as a CV. According to [Forbes](#), 63% of employers place equal or greater importance on soft skills, so it's absolutely worth going that extra mile to include them in your discovery.



Discover candidate potential with in-depth interviews

In an eye-opening piece about talent spotting in the twenty-first century, [HBR](#) listed potential as the most important predictor of success at all levels. Eschewing the brawns, brain, experience and competencies that a resumé holds dear, potential is touted as being the key to hiring the best candidate. After all, having the right skills today means little in an environment that is constantly changing – having the potential to grow and learn future-proofs your talent. But again, how do you measure for something like this?

HBR recommends mining their personal and professional history with in-depth interviews, career discussions, thorough reference checks and concrete examples of ability. Do this with the mission of spotting the four signs of potential:

Motivation Does the candidate seem to have ambition? Do they aspire to big, collective goals and are invested in self-growth and learning?

Curiosity Are they a fan of new experiences? Is there a thirst for knowledge and an openness to change and feedback?

Engagement Is connection important to them? Do they use emotion and logic to communicate?

Determination Do they fight to achieve their goals? Is there also evidence of being able to bounce back?

63%

of employers place equal or greater importance on soft skills





Consider diversity to discover culture add

Hiring with the culture of your company in mind is, arguably, just as important as hiring with skills in mind. And we're not talking about beer and ping pong, but the shared set of values, goals, attitudes, behaviour and practices that make up the organisation. It is the ethos, the way people feel about the work they are doing and the morals they believe in. As much as 50% of new hires fail within the first 18 months because of bad fit, so it is important to find people who understand the company and team DNA.

It's not about looking for the same person, it's about hiring someone who can also bring different elements that positively contribute to an organisation. The benefits to hiring with culture in mind are vast, improving job satisfaction, performance, and commitment, while also reducing attrition. BuiltIn, for example, notes that employees are 26% more likely to leave if they feel there is a lack of respect between colleagues. But how do you attract these culture-add-candidates when a resumé doesn't measure for it?

It's all about visibility. It's important that you are actively living by and promoting the values your organisation has set out. It can't be static content floating around a website. Create a dedicated page, link back to it on your career's section or in corporate blogs and job postings, use it in advertising and make it the foundation. Even film testimonials from current staff where they explain the culture and what it means to them. Ensure your prospective candidates can find the information easily and you stand a much better chance of hooking talent that also embraces these values.





How to use an interview to unearth alternative characteristics

There is no substitute for the knowledge you can acquire during an interview, even if it's virtual. Any interactions you have with a candidate outside of a digital document are the golden moments that can reveal a hidden gem. As long as you ask the right questions, that is...

Don't worry! We're not going to leave you high and dry! While this isn't a complete interview guide, it should give you an idea of the kind of questions that can elicit responses dealing directly with the intangible characteristics we've detailed above. Your goal is to avoid the mundane. You have that information on the resumé. Probe further. Ask open questions that allow the candidate to reveal their underlying attitudes. Find those subtle clues so their character is revealed.

Q *Name three of your most important considerations when working for an employer.*

Has the candidate done their homework about your company culture? This question also allows them to expand on their personal traits (soft skills) that may be advantageous.

Q *When have you performed a task without preexisting experience?*

A good guiding question that examines candidate potential. Were they flexible and adaptable enough to overcome an issue? Did they manage to learn anything?

Q *How would you explain this term to someone from a different discipline?*

This will illustrate how adept is the candidate at communication, giving them an opportunity to flaunt how logical and empathetic they may be.

Q *What's been the toughest criticism you received so far in your career?*

This question will indicate how seriously the candidate takes their work. Remembering and being able to apply criticism is an important soft skill, it shows an aptitude for growth.

Q *Do you have any other skills or interests that you feel will help you in this position?*

It's an open-ended question but the answer is worth hearing. If they reiterate their resumé then there may be a problem, but if they can enthusiastically share additional, relevant information, that could give a very thorough insight.



The final word

It is crucial to look beyond resumés in the modern world of recruitment. While they certainly hold merit and it would be a mistake to denounce them entirely, they cannot be the primary cog in the process. Especially when the average amount of time they're looked at

is reported at being 7.4 seconds! They are not equipped to deal with the aspects of work that are becoming increasingly vital – soft skills, potential and culture. These are the important markers of success. Look for solid examples of candidates actively showing these characteristics and expertise rather than merely typing it. The resumé should act as supporting information, and not the complete measure of a candidate.

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