Preparing for Resume Review

The work of resume review starts well before applicant resumes fill your inbox. Reviewing a resume starts with a job description or role profile so you know broadly what the job entails. Part of the job description, in an effective job description, details the qualifications and experience of the candidate you seek to fill the job.

Determine a Salary Range

Better candidates will inquire about the pay range before they invest a lot of time in your company. Be prepared with an appropriate response.

Develop a Key Qualifications List or Candidate Profile

This process gets you started. The next key is for Human Resources staff and the hiring manager to narrow down all of this information.

Create a list that spells out your most important candidate selection criteria. This is often called a candidate profile. You'll want to list:

- the key characteristics or traits,
- the most important skills,
- the most relevant experience
- the desired educational level, and
- the other most important factors that you will consider in candidate selection.

This list is the essence of the candidate you seek to fill your open job. It is a list of key experiences, skills, traits, and education and is essential for reviewing resumes. It forces discipline into the resume review process and gives you valuable criteria to use in resume review, and later, in candidate comparison.

The list also serves as the basis for the job interview questions you will use in screening and in-person interviews with candidates for your job.

Job Posting Example

Here is an example of an actual job posting that was created from a list of key qualifications. Notice that the candidate's qualifications are carefully defined.

- **Marketing Specialist**
  Company X, an award-winning, global leader in the xxx, xxx and xxx of xxx seeks a motivated, proactive, Marketing Specialist to develop marketing materials and website content, design ads, and generally support the marketing function. The successful candidate has a degree in Marketing, and 1-3 years experience in advertising, website development, and Internet competitive research. The successful candidate is an independent self starter, creative, customer service oriented, and writes well, Must be

familiar with Web Design software such as Adobe PhotoShop or Illustrator. Company X offers a competitive salary and a generous benefits package. Please send resume with salary requirements to: xxx

This posting enables you to screen resumes and evaluate potential candidates. The job posting ensures that you don't settle for a less than qualified person. Or, you may occasionally decide that you underpriced the market in terms of the qualifications you seek at the salary you want to pay.

In a current search for a Planning and Scheduling Supervisor, as an example, a manufacturing company is finding that the $50,000 they want to pay, may not attract the person they hope to find for the job. Their best applicants currently make $65,000 as stated in their cover letters and resumes.

All of this information helps you scan resumes more quickly. The information and preparation helps you narrow down the many resumes to the chosen few resumes with greater accuracy. The preparation makes resume review relatively painless.
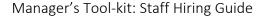
The preparation for resume review enables you to get down to the serious job of applicant resume review quickly.

Set aside a block of time whenever possible. Part of resume screening is comparing one candidate's qualifications and credentials to those listed in the other resumes you have received. Additionally, in this day of electronic applications, resume screening has taken on several new dimensions.

Some of the traditional devices used to screen resumes no longer bear the weight they once did. These include the quality of the stationery, the design of the actual document, and the envelope in which the documents arrived. Still viable for mailed-in resumes, these are useless for electronic applications, especially applications from job boards that tend to lose their formatting.

Other resume screening techniques never go out of style, including the search for proper spelling and grammar. Your quick, first skim of the resume should yield an overall impression of your candidate's carefulness and attention to detail.

Potential employees, who make careless mistakes in application materials such as resumes, do not warrant the attention that a more careful candidate deserves. Assuming the candidate's resume passes an initial inspection, this is one recommended process for reviewing resumes.

Steps in Resume Review

1. Read the customized cover letter. Look especially for a flawless presentation, correct spelling and grammar, and the applicant's attention to detail. What – there is no cover letter? This is the downside of electronic resume spamming. Receiving countless, usually unqualified, applicant resumes, occurs following every job posting. The tip off? Usually, unqualified applicants fail to write a cover letter. Choose, or choose not, to continue your resume review at this point.
2. Scan the resume to obtain an overall impression of the applicant. Look especially for a flawless presentation, correct spelling and grammar, and their attention to detail. Paper resumes must pass the "feel" test.
3. In the first skim, look for the easy-to-find qualifications. (As an example, if you are requiring a college degree, does the applicant have one?) If not, reject the resume or place it in your "maybe" meets qualifications pile or electronic folder.
4. Read the description of what the candidate says they are looking for in their next job. Is the statement customized to your job or does it describe any job in the world? As an example, I generally reject resumes that make statements such as, "I seek a challenging opportunity to utilize my skills with a progressive employer who will provide opportunities for growth." Honestly, you've got to do better than to offer this type of generality to pass the resume screen.
5. Look for a summary statement of qualifications and experience. If the candidate has taken the time and customized their summary for your job, this enables you to quickly find the characteristics you seek from your role profile. These resumes quickly hit the "further review" pile. Applicants also need to recognize that more and more larger organizations are scanning resumes into data bases. When a job becomes available, resumes are scanned for relevant keywords. Make the keywords easy to find.
6. Review the most recent employers and the applicant's stated experience, accomplishments, and contributions. At this point, you must have found significant cross-over between the applicant's resume and your requirements. Place the resume in your "to be reviewed further" folder unless you have encountered problems. Red flags at this point in your resume review, that are unexplained on the resume or in the cover letter, include:
   --employment gaps,
   --evidence of decreasing responsibility,
   --evidence of a career that has reached a plateau or gone backwards,
   --short term employment at several jobs, and
   --multiple shifts in career path.
7. Review your selected resumes against your criteria and each other.
8. Telephone screen the seemingly qualified candidates. Schedule interviews with the candidates who pass your initial screen.

The more you review resumes, the better your resume review will become. With practice, your resume review may be called gone in twenty seconds, or even, gone in ten seconds, while your resume review continues to yield great candidates.