



the **LavaCon** Conference on

# Advanced Technical Communication and Project Management

## **The 10 Most Common Mistakes Tech Writers Make When Looking for Work**

by Jack Molisani  
President, ProSpring Technical Staffing  
[www.ProSpringStaffing.com](http://www.ProSpringStaffing.com)



## About the Speaker

- **Staff Technical Writer, Contract TW, Documentation Manager**
- **President, ProSpring Technical Staffing**
- **Exec Dir, The LavaCon Conference on Technical Communication and Project Management**



# Ground Rules and Warnings

- **Group Participation**
- **Anything I say is just my opinion—try it and see if it works for *you*.**
- **I'll present opposing points of view on certain topics and let you decide.**
- **Speaking in Hypertext**
- **Chinese Artists**

# Overview

- **Recruiters (both HR and external agents) receive tens if not *hundreds* of resumes a day.**
- **Do everything you can to make it easy for them to help you get the job.**
- **The mistakes are presented in order of chronology, not severity—some are more “deadly” than others!**





# 1. Not Following Submission Directions

- **Make a good first impression—  
follow the submission directions!**
- **Formatted Resume or Plain Text?**
- **“No calls.”**



## 2. Not Building Professional Relationships

- **Get to know people, build your professional network, meet your recruiter.**
- **You want someone who will sing your praises to the next person in the hiring process...**
- **...especially if you are not an exact match or have an odd situation.**
- **Plus, when a great job comes in, who do you think we're going to call first?**

### 3. Bad Manners

- **It's poor form to mail your resume to 45 recruiters in one email...**
- **...especially when you display them all in the To: field!**
- **Keep a log of where your resume has been sent.**
- **Don't insult the recruiter.  
(I'm not kidding—it happens!)**



## 4. Applying When You Are not Even Remotely Qualified

- Pay attention to the "must have" vs. "nice to have" requirements.
- Do apply for jobs that are a bit of a stretch, but at least be in the ballpark!





## 5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements

- **Not all recruiters have the time to read your resume from top to bottom.**
- **Many just skim for keywords.**
- **They can't possibly understand what makes a good TW as well as you do.**
- **Do you *really* want someone who is not a professional TW deciding if you are a good enough to pass on?**



## 5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements (cont.)

- **Be proactive: send a summary of how your experience matches the job requirements.**
- **If you don't have one of the requirements, this is where you say, "I don't have XYZ, but I do have ABC..."**



## 5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements (cont.)

- **Suddenly, recruiters love you:**
  - **They didn't have to search for the information.**
  - **You typed the summary for them.**
  - **You pointed out important information they may have missed.**
  - **All they had to do is verify the information and pass it on.**



## 6. Misnaming Your Resume

- Remember, recruiters receive tens if not hundreds of resumes a day.
- Would *you* want to receive 100 resumes a day named "resume.doc"?
- Name your resume so it can be found easily: for example, "Joe Jones.doc"
- About your email address...





## 7. Poor Resumes

- **Your resume is the first sample of your writing skill.**
- **Programmers can get away with poor resumes, but TWs cannot!**
- **Hiring managers judge candidates based on their resumes...**
- **...and will disqualify you if have mistakes in your resume.**



## 8. Mis-evaluation of Importances

- **Highlight your strengths.**
- **Minimize your weaknesses.**
- **Put the most applicable information, experience or skills near the top of your resume.**
- **Put less applicable experience near the bottom.**



## 9. Not Anticipating Questions

- **Recruiters will wonder about oddities in resumes, so be proactive and explain them.**
- **Examples:**
  - **Gaps in Your Work History**
  - **Your Citizenship or Work Visa Status**
  - **Moving from Contract to Perm**
  - **Need Relocation Assistance?**



# 10. Not Keeping Current

- **Not Knowing Your Tools**
- **Nothing is worse than losing a great job because someone else kept up with the latest tools and technology and you did not.**





# Summary

- **Follow submission directions.**
- **Use good manners.**
- **Name your electronic resume.**
- **Use a professional email address.**
- **Have a flawless resume.**
- **Highlight your strengths, minimize your weaknesses.**
- **Keep your skills current.**
- **Include a summary of how your experience and skills match the job requirements.**



[www.lavacon.org](http://www.lavacon.org)

[www.ProspringStaffing.com](http://www.ProspringStaffing.com)

888-378-2333