

How to Make It After You've Lost Your Job

There are ways to minimize certain realities on your new resume, and make it an effective tool to get you past the door and to the interview. Losing your job can be a blessing in disguise and these tips will help you land that dream job. Use these pointers for creating a resume that gets results.

1. Use the resume format work that works for you, downplaying the loss of a job. Instead of using a reverse chronological format that accentuates employment dates, use a functional format that showcases what you know rather than where you attained that expertise. For an accountant that would mean highlighting skills in reconciling accounts, generating tax returns, implementing internal controls, etc. The fact that these skills were attained at XYZ Company is minimized as employer names are not mentioned until the very end of the resume.
2. Never explain on a resume that you were let go. As much as hiring managers want to be fair and open-minded, they are only human and will tend to dismiss any candidate who admits to being fired. No matter how you try to explain your dismissal (i.e. "It was office politics." "My manager didn't like me; I have no idea why." "It's because I'm old; they wanted someone younger." "They didn't want to pay me a living wage so they hired someone less expensive."), the explanation will still sound negative.
3. Use dates of employment to your advantage. If you were fired from a job of short duration that fell within the same year as your last position, it can be completely excluded. For example - you worked at ABC Company from March to September of 2007. Before that, you worked at DEF Company from July of 2002 to February of 2007. Simply list the second company (DEF) with the years of employment (2002-2007). This will show an unbroken employment record.
4. Don't confuse being laid off or let go due to downsizing as being fired. If your company was bought out by another firm and you were let go, that's not the same as being fired. If your position has been eliminated (for whatever reason), you weren't technically fired. Hiring managers tend to look at "being fired" as a negative that was caused by the employee (eg: they stole company funds, they were always late to work, they didn't fulfill their daily duties, etc.) It's important to note the distinction and to list those jobs on your resume when economic conditions, beyond your control, were a factor.
5. When there's no way to avoid the fact that you've been fired. If the industry you're working in is a small one and everyone knows about your job loss, then it's essential to showcase the positive (what you achieved at the job or what you learned), and to minimize the negative (confrontations with management or co-workers). A job search is not the time to prove that you were treated unfairly at the last company - rather, it's the time to prove to the new company that you can excel because of your unique set of skills and qualifications.

These tips will ensure that you make it through the initial screening by a hiring manager. Once you do, it's up to you to focus on your strengths and what you can bring your new company.

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About the Author

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