

# CAREERS

## Reviewing resumes and cover letters

BY AMY R. RAMOS

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY SOUND

You're making your first hire as a manager, you have no HR assistant, and you're starting to get responses to the ad you placed in the Daily Sound. To tackle that pile of correspondence, you may want to find a partner — someone whose judgment you trust. It's valuable to have another person's perspective when evaluating prospective new team members. Then get out your list of the critical skill and experience requirements for the position, and use that as your guide while sorting through the responses.

1. Give first priority to those responses that provide all the materials specified in your ad — application, cover letter, resume, work samples, etc. — by the deadline. (But if you asked for a salary history, don't be surprised if you don't get one — applicants are generally advised not to provide them.) You can keep late or incomplete responses as a back-up, in case your top choices don't pan out.

2. You can disregard responses that look sloppy or unprofessional, but keep in mind what's most important for the job you're trying to fill. If you're hiring a public relations representative who will be issuing news releases for your company, the cover letter and resume should be flawless. If you're filling a position that doesn't do much writing, you may decide to accept some typos in the cover letter.

3. When reviewing resumes, look for key words that match the qualities and

experience you're looking for. Delve deeper than impressive job titles and well-known companies — look for action verbs. What did the candidate accomplish in her previous jobs?

4. Don't give too much weight to prestigious credentials. A candidate with an advanced degree may not make a better employee than one with a bachelor's; someone with ten years of experience is not necessarily twice as good as the candidate with five. Focus on the qualifications that are really needed for success in the job.

5. Look for red flags such as: short tenure in previous jobs; long gaps in employment; or involuntary terminations. These shouldn't be automatically disqualifying; if the other qualifications look strong, you may want to contact the candidate and ask some frank questions in the interview.

6. Read through the responses separately from your reviewing partner, then go over your top choices together once you've each finished. Resolve any differences to determine your list of finalists.

7. You'll be inviting finalists to an interview, but don't forget to contact other candidates to thank them for responding. They may be disappointed not to get an interview, but they'll respect your courtesy.

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