

13 Ways Your Resume Can Say "I am Unprofessional"

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No offense, **thebigcheese@domain.com**, but if nobody has told you yet, we're telling you now: *That e-mail address is not making you look particularly professional.*

Unprofessional e-mail addresses are just one way of sending hiring managers the wrong message. If you want to be taken seriously when you apply for jobs, you need to put some polish on your resume, your cover letter and everything contained therein. Hiring professionals repeatedly run across these red flags that scream "unprofessional." A number of recruiters and HR managers shared with **TheLadders** common errors from their own professional experiences.

Here are 13 Ways Your Resume Can Say "I am Unprofessional"...

1. Random/cute/shared e-mail accounts

E-mail accounts are free. There's no reason not to sign up for your own. Yet many mid-career professionals share an e-mail account with a significant other or the entire family, generating addresses such as [dickandjane@domain.com](#) or [thesmiths@domain.com](#). Also stay away from cutesy addresses. After all, [butterfliesaremyfriend2010@domain.com](#), you can always share your admiration of *Lepidoptera* with colleagues after you've been hired. Ditto for offensive, flirtatious or sexual e-mail addresses. Think we're exaggerating? These are actual e-mail accounts cited by **Jillian Zavitz**, who's responsible for hiring as the programs manager for [TalktoCanada.com](#), an online English language-training course based in Canada. (We've changed the domain names to protect the innocent.) Instead, adopt an address that incorporates the name you use professionally on your resume and cover letter.

2. Failure to proofread

Deidre Pannazzo, executive director at [Inspired Resumes](#), said it's "amazing" how many people submit resumes that contain "numerous typos and misspellings." Even better than spell check, she said, is to have a friend review the document for you. "Make sure your dates are consistent, and that you don't confuse your story with overlapping time lines," she said.

3. Bikini pictures

Resume experts advise against attaching pictures or any image files to a resume. They can "choke" an applicant tracking system (ATS), the software that automatically scans and parses resumes. In addition, hiring professionals warn against giving anyone a reason to prejudge and form a negative opinion based on your appearance. Indeed, some HR departments will immediately discard resumes with photos to avoid any possible accusations of discrimination on this basis. But still applicants send photos. Most troublesome of all, said Zavitz, are the beach shots. "(No) pictures where you are in a bikini at the beach (real story, and it wasn't a flattering picture either) or at a New Year's party with your friends (obviously drunk). Not cool."

4. Unprofessional voicemail

If your resume is strong enough to convince the recruiter or hiring manager to reach for the telephone, be sure what he finds at the other end of the line represents you in the best light – that means your voicemail or whoever might answer the phone. **Marlane Perry**, managing director of the [Executive Search Division of Magill Associates](#), said she is unimpressed when a phone number on a resume leads her to an unprofessional recorded voicemail or a conversation with a third party who can't be trusted to take a message. "If you don't trust your roommates to answer the phone and take a decent message, then only list your cell phone," she said.

5. Lazy words, 'etc.'

Perry said that use of "etc." on a resume is a sign of laziness: The job seeker obviously "can't even take the time to list out all of [his] duties." She has seen the error on both junior- and executive-level resumes. Another no-no is saying "same as above" anywhere on a resume. "If you had similar job functions at your last two jobs, summarize the responsibilities and then bullet out some of your accomplishments," she suggested.

6. Cookie-cutter resumes

Samantha Goldberg is a celebrity event designer and TV personality who's always looking for employees for administrative duties or to help plan an event. She said she often reviews resumes and cover letters that aren't even vaguely customized for her business. "It's more like 'Mad Libs' — they just fill in our name as they send them off!" she said. "Just once, I would love to have them describe me on the cover letter instead of saying that they respect my career status and have been following my career." On many occasions, Goldberg said, she specifically lists a prerequisite of at least three years' experience with planning events that does not include friends, family or applicants' own weddings. "They obviously don't read my prerequisites and send an e-mail stating that even though they haven't orchestrated events for anyone they have always been told they should be in the industry if I would just give them a chance."

7. Everything but the kitchen sink

"I don't care, nor have time, to read about your life story," Zavitz said. "If you can't whittle your resume down to a page or two at max, I will not read it. If it's not related [to the job or your work history], don't include it."

8-13 ad infinitum...

Larry Lambeth, president of [Employment Screening Services Inc.](#), which helps companies review job applicants, offered a laundry list of professional gaffes he's seen on resumes and job applications:

- Listing a spouse as a reference
- Not spelling out the name of an employer or school ("LSU" instead of "Louisiana State University" or "ZDE" instead of "Ziff Davis Enterprise")
- Not providing a city or state for an employer or school
- Omitting the area code from a phone number for a reference or employer
- Providing only a first name for a supervisor or reference
- Including phone numbers that are no longer in service for references or employers

Lisa Vaas covers resume writing techniques and the technology behind the job search for **TheLadders**.