

# Can't get a call back from a job? You might be making one of these common mistakes.

Abril, Danielle . The Washington Post (Online) , Washington, D.C.: WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post. Nov 8, 2021.

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## FULL TEXT

The "Great Resignation" can quickly become the never-ending job search for people who quit during the coronavirus pandemic.

That's what life has recently felt like for Patrick Moran, who is hoping for a major career change —from production manager at a Rhode Island doughnut bakery to an office job. The 25-year-old says he previously never used online tools for work. So applying through various Web portals with little guidance or knowledge on how to use them only led to discouragement.

"It's defeating applying for a bunch of jobs and not getting a call back," he said.

Moran was making a number of common mistakes, according to job experts, but with just a few tweaks and a little more time, he could vastly increase his chances of getting hired. The Washington Post sat in on consultations with Moran and three job coaches to uncover the best ways for job seekers to use tech tools and avoid some of the pitfalls. The gist: Finding an online job listing and submitting a résumé is the bare minimum. Tech tools, if used correctly, can aid job seekers in landing their next jobs, but they can also create a network that can serve them well into the future.

"This is the power of social media," and tech, said Yolanda Owens, a former corporate recruiter and founder of the coaching service CareerSensei Consulting in Washington, D.C. "You will be surprised to learn that help will come from unexpected places."

Experts said Moran, like many others, probably wasn't getting much interest from recruiters and employers because he was missing some key elements in his résumé and online profile, which is where recruiters find most of their candidates. And with a little help from Google, LinkedIn and social media sites, he could strengthen his network and his chances of getting hired.

First, he was missing a summary that should be at the top of every résumé or online professional profile, experts say. This becomes even more important for people who are trying to transition from one industry to another, because it allows them to explain how they are a fit for the job even though their previous experience may not be directly related.

Adrian Klaphaak, founder of the Bay Area career- and life-coaching service A Path That Fits, took the summary a step further, suggesting that Moran search Google, Indeed and LinkedIn for openings for the job title he wants —even if he doesn't necessarily want to apply for that specific opening —and look for commonalities in the descriptions. Identify the top five skills or qualities they all have in common, he said. Then, after a couple of introductory lines, bullet point each skill that the candidate possesses and follow it with a line explaining how the skill was demonstrated in previous jobs. Preferably pair each with metrics or numbers as proof.

"The more that you can add specifics to your résumé that prove that you can do what you say you can, the more excited that gets the hiring manager," he said.

Lauren Milligan, career coach and founder of ResuMAYDAY in Warrenville, Ill., who offered to help Moran after reading about his employment struggles, said the summary section is also a great place for candidates to

showcase their personalities and most marketable skills. In Moran's case, she said, personality was one of his greatest strengths.

"If someone was saying, 'What is Patrick's brand?' This [summary] is what it'd be," she said. "On LinkedIn, it can be more conversational —it's still social media."

In an era when a computer is likely to see Moran —or any applicant's —résumé before any human ever does, experts say there's one thing all job seekers should keep in mind: keywords, keywords, keywords.

Job seekers should research the jobs they want to determine the best keywords to include in their online profiles. This could be anything from the actual job title to key skills, qualities, software programs or technical qualifications. The keywords should be peppered throughout people's résumés and LinkedIn profiles.

"Stay away from general things like 'communicating' or 'working in teams,'" Owens said. "Use things specific to the job like 'staff management' or 'production operations.'"

Owens suggests job seekers list the title they want as their current position on LinkedIn, even if they have to preface it with "aspiring" beforehand. "That's what the recruiters will be using to find you," she said. "This will help you come up to the top of the search."

Another commonly missed opportunity for job seekers? Their professional online profiles and résumés often list their previous work experience as job descriptions rather than accomplishments, in which recruiters and hiring managers are more interested. Additionally, job seekers can make their past work even stronger if they can tie their accomplishments to a skill or objective required for the new job.

"Most people just copy and paste their job description," Owens said. "Accomplishments that are unique to you is going to set you apart from competition."

Finally, never underestimate the power of a professional network, say experts. And if you don't have one, it's time to build one. But in the age of social media, that's easier than ever before.

LinkedIn is a good place to start, experts say, because job seekers can find people in two ways. First, they can use the search tool to find people who currently or formerly worked at the hiring company. Or they can search the companies themselves, and employees who have listed the company as their employer will be linked to the companies' profile.

The low-hanging fruit would be friends, family or other first-level connections who may work for the company. But job seekers should also look for second-level connections —people whom they may not know but one of their friends might. LinkedIn makes it easy by labeling each person's connection level. Once job seekers find a second-level connection, they just need to reach out to their common contact and ask for an introduction.

Even third-level connections —people with whom the job seeker has no mutual contacts —are fair game. Though for those connections, job seekers will probably have to cold-request a connection on LinkedIn and include a message to help the person understand who they are. The best way to go about this, according to Klaphaak, is to try to find something this person may have done in their work, tweeted about, shared online or at least something their company is working on.

"The approach isn't like, 'Hey, I want a job,'" Klaphaak said. "It's more, 'Hey, I'm interested in what you do, and what your company does and I'd love to hear more about it.'"

One of the benefits of the Internet is that so much of what people say and do is public. People have Instagram profiles, Twitter accounts and even their own personal blogs and websites. LinkedIn is a great starting point for networking, but learning about people and who they're connected to, what they might know and how their connections might help in the job search is valuable information. It just requires a little Internet sleuthing, experts say.

Lastly, after sprucing up the résumé, LinkedIn account and any other professional online profiles —which should all be consistent in messaging and job history —job seekers would be wise to take a potentially uncomfortable step: Post about their job search on their personal social network channels, and be specific about the type of job they're seeking.

"People are going to be thinking about you, so when they do hear about jobs, they're going to shoot it to you,"

Milligan said. "You're basically developing your own personal sales team to have leads come to you so you don't have to work so hard."

After learning about the online strategies he could use, Moran says he gained a new sense of confidence in his job search. He already has plans for his first steps: Update his résumé and LinkedIn profile to follow best practices and reapply to his top-choice job. Networking will be next on the list.

"I don't know if everyone should take a class on this or what," he said. But now, what he needs to do has "become a lot more clear."

### Five quick tips for job seekers

*Include a summary:* All professional profiles and résumés should have a summary at the very top that highlight a job seeker's most marketable skills and give employers a sense of their personality. This is even more important for candidates who may not have direct job experience for the position to which they are applying.

*Use keywords:* Professional profiles, especially those online, should have keywords sprinkled throughout to help the candidate get past the computer systems that may be reviewing their résumé first. Experts say job seekers should research the most common qualities and skills needed for the job and include them, if applicable.

*Highlight accomplishments:* Job seekers should refrain from relying on job descriptions to explain their previous experience. Instead, they should highlight their accomplishments with as many specifics as possible.

*Connect with professionals online:* Candidates' professional networks can often lead to the next job. Experts say job seekers should be contacting people they know within the industries that interest them. But they also should be asking for introductions to people whom their friends, family and colleagues may know, as well as messaging people with whom they have no connection at all.

*Post on social media:* To increase the chances of getting hired, experts say job seekers would be wise to post on their personal social networks to let people know they're looking for a job and provide specifics about what they hope to find.

## DETAILS

<b>Subject:</b>	Job titles; Hiring; Careers; Candidates; Keywords; Job descriptions; Employment; Social networks; Skills
<b>Business indexing term:</b>	Subject: Job titles Hiring Careers Job descriptions Employment Social networks
<b>Company / organization:</b>	Name: LinkedIn Corp; NAICS: 518210
<b>Publication title:</b>	The Washington Post (Online); Washington, D.C.
<b>Publication year:</b>	2021
<b>Publication date:</b>	Nov 8, 2021
<b>Section:</b>	Technology
<b>Publisher:</b>	WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post
<b>Place of publication:</b>	Washington, D.C.
<b>Country of publication:</b>	United States, Washington, D.C.
<b>Publication subject:</b>	General Interest Periodicals--United States

ISSN: 26419599

Source type: Blog, Podcast, or Website

Language of publication: English

Document type: News

ProQuest document ID: 2594910771

Document URL: <https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/can-t-get-call-back-job-you-might-be-making-one/docview/2594910771/se-2?accountid=44910>

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Last updated: 2021-11-09

Database: U.S. Major Dailies

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