



## CARY COMMUNICATIONS INSIGHTS

# How to Tell If Your Resume is Actually Working

By Karen Bluestein

Most resumes are not bad. They are just ineffective.

They list jobs. They show effort. They look professional enough. And yet, they do not lead to interviews. That gap is where most candidates get stuck.

An effective resume is not judged by how much information it contains. It is judged by whether it moves the reader to take the next step. Here is how to tell if yours is doing its job.

### 1. It passes the six-second test

Recruiters and hiring managers skim before they read. If someone looked at your resume for six seconds, would they immediately understand what you do and why it matters?

Your headline and top third should answer three questions fast:

1. What role are you targeting?
2. What problem do you solve?
3. At which level do you operate?

If the opening section reads like a generic summary or career objective, the resume is already losing ground.

### 2. It is written for a role, not for history

An effective resume is selective. It does not document everything you have done. It curates what is relevant for the role you want next.

If your resume could be sent unchanged to five different jobs, that is a red flag. Strong resumes are directional. They make it clear what kind of opportunity you are pursuing and quietly steer the reader there.

### 3. It shows impact, not responsibility

Job descriptions tell what you were responsible for. Resumes should show what changed because you were there.

Scan your bullets. If most start with phrases like responsible for, involved in, or supported, the resume is too passive. Strong bullets highlight outcomes, scale, growth, efficiency, revenue, risk reduction, or decision support.

Numbers help, but clarity matters more. Not every role produces clean metrics. What matters is that the reader can see cause and effect.

### 4. It aligns with how hiring actually works

Your resume needs to work for both software and humans.

That means:

- Clear role titles
- Standard section headings
- Relevant keywords used naturally
- Clean formatting that does not rely on text boxes or heavy graphics

If your resume looks beautiful but struggles to get parsed, or reads well to software but poorly to people, it is not doing its full job.

## 5. It sounds like you, on your best day

An effective resume has a confident, credible voice. Not inflated. Not apologetic. Not stuffed with buzzwords.

If you read your resume out loud and it sounds stiff, vague, or overly corporate, it is worth revisiting. Hiring managers are trained to spot exaggeration and emptiness. Specific language builds trust faster than grand claims.

## 6. It supports your LinkedIn profile, not duplicates it

Your resume and LinkedIn profile should reinforce each other, not compete.

If your resume feels flat compared to your LinkedIn profile, or if they tell two different stories, that inconsistency creates friction. The strongest candidates present a coherent narrative across both, with each playing a distinct role.

## 7. It generates the right response

The clearest test of all is this: what happens after you send it?

An effective resume leads to:

- Interviews
- Follow up conversations
- Additional engagement
- Better alignment with the roles you want

If you are getting interviews but not offers, the issue may be elsewhere. But if you are sending out resumes and hearing nothing, the document is not doing its job, regardless of how polished it looks.

## The bottom line

Your resume is not a biography. It is a decision tool and a marketing piece.

When it works, it makes the next step feel obvious to the reader. When it does not, it creates hesitation, confusion, or indifference.

If you want to test your resume objectively, ask one simple question: would someone who does not know me understand my value in under a minute?

If the answer is no, the resume needs work.

Need help improving your resume? [Contact](#) Cary Communications for a free 15-minute consultation.

---

Cary Communications | [hello@carycomms.com](mailto:hello@carycomms.com) | (919) 578-2666 | [Portfolio](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Career Services | Corporate Communications | Creative Services

Personal Branding | Career Coaching | Executive Resumes | Messaging | Presentations | Graphics Design